PROGRESS REPORT

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Reporting UN Organization  | United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) |
| Country | Lebanon |
| Implementing Partner | National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) |
| Project Number | LBN2G102 |
| Project Title | Women Empowerment: Peaceful Action for Security and Stability (WE PASS) |
| Project Start Date | March 2008 |
| Project Time frame | 26 months  |
| Reporting Period | July-September 2009 |
| Budget | **$994,458 (Total)** |

**PURPOSE**

* 1. **Project Summary and Objectives**

In development, it is always a challenge to design and implement projects that address the needs of beneficiaries, while introducing sustainable tools to solve the problems. It becomes a more difficult task when the timing is post war recovery like the case of Project LBN2G102 (referred to as “*Women Empowerment: Peaceful Action for Security and Stability*” WE PASS) jointly implemented by the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The project which was based on UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, started as a pilot in selected villages that suffered from the war of July 2006. It was launched in cooperation with municipal councils and Social Development Service Centers in selected communities. One of its main results was the establishment of women committees that act as beneficiaries of capacity building programs and partners to prioritize the needs of the women and conduct community activities. Previously, the project attracted funding for two consecutive periods: October 2006 to May 2007 (Phase I) and June 2007 to February 2008 (Phase II) respectively and was implemented in 10 communities in the South, Bekaa, and the Beirut Suburb namely Aytaroun, Bint Jbeil, Yarine, Nabatiyeh, Doueir, Deir Mimass, Ghaziyeh, Kfeir, Ras Baalback, and Ghobeiry. Today, project LBN2G102 is ongoing within the LRF support in the initial ten villages mentioned above, but also expanding to additional new villages as follows: Kuwaikhat and Kantara, Sebel, Harf Ardhe, Mina (North), Bourj Hammoud, Bourjein (Mount Lebanon), Beit Lahya (Cluster of 5 villages) (Bekaa). The selection criteria determining the choice of the new communities are the following: a) having a woman as member of municipal council, b) classified as villages below the poverty line as categorized by official reports (CDR, MOSA), and c) where municipal councils are interested in playing an active role throughout the project. This last criterion as a result of field evaluation in the previous phases, and where the role of municipality has proven to be a great asset or a serious hinder. It also leads to putting more time in mobilizing and sensitizing the municipality and community leaders’ prior to the final selection of villages. The criteria apply on all selected villages except for the cluster of 5 villages around Beit Lahya village in Western Bekaa. Two of those targeted villages comply with the criteria, namely Beit Lahya and Ain Horsha, yet the rest of the municipalities approached Beit Lahya, then the project management, hoping to profit from the activities. Upon assessing the possibility of that, the Steering committee opted to include those villages, dealing with them as cluster.

Each phase was a continuation of the previous one, building on the success stories and benefitting from the lessons learned. The additional objectives that differentiate among phases were a result of evaluation achieved in a participatory approach among the concerned stakeholders, on top of them the beneficiaries themselves. A main change that developed among phases, was the ability of the project to give direct focus to UNSCR 1325; In the first two phases, contribution of women to peace had to be a long term objective introduced as a cross cutting dimension among the “women empowerment issues”. In this current Phase III, this topic is a bold one that will be addressed directly through innovative tools. It is feasible for two reasons; on one hand the project gained credibility and established trust in the old communities, and therefore the mention of security council resolution and the word peace are no longer taken out of their context; on the other hand the armed clashes in May 2007 and the problems in the North put women under pressure to act. The other components will still continue to be addressed, i.e. participation in decision making, rights and gender discrimination, Gender Based Violence, Reproductive health, and economic empowerment for women.

In the planning for this phase, the project moved from focusing on increasing awareness to building capacities for transfer of knowledge. A new development in the current phase is the focus in supporting old and new women committees to become sustainable entities or NGOs. The approach adopted in all phases continues to be participatory with the women committees, and is cross sectoral and multi-dimensional targeting women, community leaders and municipal councils, service providers, youth, grass root organizations, women machineries and coalition, and community sectors.

The current phase III of the project aims at empowering women by building their capacities in decision-making, economic development, citizenship, leadership, reducing their vulnerability to violence, literacy programmes, increasing their access to reproductive health services, and promoting a culture of peace building and peace maintenance. A main objective is also building a solidarity network among an estimated 300-350 women (from the women committees established in the 20 villages (both old and new) and putting in place a mechanism that would ensure a linkage with the municipal councils and bring support to various community sectoral entities i.e. health, education, agriculture, etc. for promoting women advancement at grass root level and building a culture of peace. Another new dimension under phase III is targeting the youth, and working with them on the project’s dimensions based on their needs and aspirations particularly in community development and participation. Throughout the activities there is a particular emphasis on the well being of young people within a life skills approach.

Last but not least, an institutional and capacity building of women machineries and bodies at both the national and community levels through guarantying a participatory approach is emphasized in the workplan of this phase. The consensus on a revised and updated national women strategy linked to national priorities and aligned with the principles of the most recent Ministerial statement, the Social Action Plan (SAP) as well as CEDAW principles will be a goal to achieve as a result of this phase, a process which has already started under Phase II. It is also promising that the new appointed board of NCLW reflected eagerness to carry on in implementing the project while respecting any decisions and plans formulated in the past. This ensures smooth institutional transition and continuity.

The current phase of the project is developed within the framework of a human rights approach based on UNSCR 1325 and on national agendas and strategies like the National Population Policy, the National Women Strategy, and the National Gender Based Violence Action Plan, while concepts of Gender Equity, Equality, and Empowerment of Women and Youth empowerment were integrated in the project programmes and initiatives.

The focus of the current phase III is on accomplishing the following objectives as stated in the initial project document:

* 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

Different strategies and mechanisms will be adopted throughout the implementation of Phase III, such as:

* Coordination and networking among the various concerned groups and entities at community and national levels
* Outreach and awareness raising strategies and activities
* Community and national dialogue/Sensitization/advocacy
* Capacity and institutional development
* Income generation projects and initiatives
	1. **Expected Outputs**

The following outputs have been identified to be implemented under this phase:

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 SCR 1325 as well as Comprehensive service package (health, GBV, literacy, and life kill) 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
	1. **Project Linkages to National Priorities and Recovery**

Project LBN2G102 throughout all its phases is keen to base its interventions on programs and strategies adopted on the local, national and international levels. The main inspirations were the ICPD PoA (International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action), the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals, the National Reproductive Health Programme, the National Woman Strategy, the National Population Policy, the Social Action Plan, the draft National Youth Policy, the National Gender Based Violence Action Plan, and the CEDAW report and commission observations.

Project LBN2G102 addresses Reproductive Health (RH) issues and areas that are aligned with the National Reproductive Health Programme (NRHP) that promote women’s ability to control their own fertility, choices, number of children, etc. While RH issues were initially judged by the beneficiaries as general information on health, the approach used based the value of knowledge and its impact once women take responsibility in transforming the knowledge into positive attitudes and responsible behaviors. It also became evident that it is not enough to know, and to have the choice to make decisions about her own body, but a woman needs to be empowered and aware of her rights so she can live in a healthy way according to standards she decides to assume. Upon conducting the RH awareness sessions based on the comprehensive national RH package, all communities with no exception were interested to attend more of these sessions and it influenced many of the beneficiaries in their general view of the rest of the project’s activities. The RH was the topic of attraction that brought together member of community living local conflict. The topic was selected based on the suggestion of the Women Committees that perceived its importance and its ability to attract the attention of audience beyond their personal agendas. Addressing RH also seems as a tool used in communities that suffer from local conflicts to bring together people with different affiliations.

More so, the project Phase III continues to promote the objectives set in the national women strategy in Lebanon, and which discusses frames of actions in the following aspects: legal, political, economic, social, educational, health, environmental, media, and conflict areas. The phase II of project LBN2G10 initiated the revision and updating the national women strategy 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 will continue under the current Phase III.

As it was the case under the phases I and II, the current phase III will also ensure that the various activities and interventions respond to and contribute to realizing the Millennium Development Goals namely goal 3. Specifically, the project will contribute 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 will also support in 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 that will continue to be articulated under Phase III is related to Gender based violence (GBV) prevention and protection and hence activities and interventions will be guided by the Gender Based Violence national action plan. Specifically, this phase will address GBV through capacity development, community mobilization and sensitization, awareness raising, mapping of GBV referral and services, development of quality assurance normative tools and creation of support groups.

Furthermore and with the aim of disseminating the spirit of the Convention of the Elimination on Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and during phase II, the project started introducing discussions on CEDAW, preparing the women committees for a role to play in contributing to conferences and seminars to be implemented in different regions around Lebanon to discuss the latest recommendations from the Fortieth session of the Committee on CEDAW taking place early 2008.

In the current phase, the project is developing a plan with other national projects supported by UNFPA. The main objective is to cooperate with projects within the ministry of Public Health and Ministry of Social Affairs to complement the project’s activities and ensure a wider exposure of partners. This requires a sound planning in order to avoid overlap, maximize profit from existing resources (human and material), find the suitable timing relative to the limited options given by the communities, and finally harmonizing the approaches in accordance with the specificity of each culture. Linking with the Youth peer to peer project (Y-PEER) is one of the main opportunities.

* 1. **Project Implementing Partners**

Promoting coordinated efforts with various entities including NGOs, municipalities, community committees, schools, health care centers, social development centers, and other UNFPA supported projects etc… is one major objective of the project.

This project is nationally implemented by the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) in coordination with women NGOs, especially umbrella organizations. 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. The Project’s Steering Committee was and still is committed to supervise and monitor the work of the project, and its involvement goes beyond the strategic planning to be implicated with details of the field work. The project steering committee established under phase I (consisting of selected NCLW members, UNFPA and the project management) will continue 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 implementing partners.

As for the partnership with NGOs, the project under this Phase III continues to coordinate with specialized NGOs, such as **KAFA** “Enough Violence and Exploitation” and **Lebanese Council to Resist Violence** (LECORVAW) in reference to GBV related initiatives; **EPEP** in reference to literacy; and **Al Majmoua** in reference to economic empowerment, as well as **Sustainable Democracy Center on** Participation of women in local governance. More NGOs will be engaged on areas related to youth, reproductive health, peace, electoral and participation tools. In addition to local NGOs with a defined and relevant role, the project will strive to liaise with international NGOs, on the economic development component in particular, and with ones that have a previous and current involvement in income generating projects.

The project cooperates 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.

Collaboration with ILO was initiated for benefitting from ILO’s expertise in micro credit schemes and for ensuring synergy and complementarity between the two projects.

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 during Phase III, and it became more vital as the women committees developed. Efforts will be made to sustain this partnership.

UNFPA is mainly performing the overall guidance, monitoring and evaluation of the project, in addition to providing technical support through its national staff and international advisors. UNFPA is also a member in the project’s steering committee.

**RESOURCES**

Funding has been committed to cover expenditures for this reporting period for the total of **$70,717**. These resources cover the staff salaries, training of new and old committees on different component detailed in the result section, subcontracts on Literacy, and Sensitization and training Women’s participation in municipal elections. The budget breakdown during this reporting period per LRF category is as such:

Personnel: $29,910

Training: $1,400

Subcontract: $16,445

Transport: $22,962

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL:** **$**70,717

**RESULTS**

* 1. **Progress made to date/Main activities**

|  |
| --- |
| *Output 1: Technical and Institutional Capacities of Women Machineries, Municipal Councils, and Organizations for advocacy, policy development and networking towards women’s advancement strengthened*  |
| **Activity 1.1. Develop Capacities on differences and plurality.** Women committee from*Kfeir* and *Beyt Lahiya* clusterwere sensitized on the concept of accepting others differences, and empowered to conflict resolution approaches when facing conflicts due to diversity. |
| **Activity 1.2. Train women committees towards sustainable entities.** Two committees in *Sibil* and *Kfeir* are following extensive training to develop into sustainable organization, mainly NGO and Cooperative. The series of training aim at supporting a strong alliance of women with a strategic vision and coherence among them. Thus, the women committee in *Kfeir* participated in conflict resolution training to address a main need they are planning with the trainers for their future needs. The committee of *Sibil* is in the process of developing their strategy i.e. the mission, vision, goals, and plan of activities for their new organization. The participatory process is guiding the trainer in these activities whereby it is training sessions followed by coaching. *Ras Baalback* committee turned into an NGO is also following a training to develop their action plan on gender and community development.  |

|  |
| --- |
| *Output 2: Outreach, Awareness Raising, Community Mobilization on SCR 1325 as well as comprehensive service package (health, GBV, literacy, and life skills)* |
| **Activity 2.1. Conduct literacy program.** Once a month theliteracy group meet so the learners would keep in touch and discuss issues that matter to them, and review material they have previously studied. The groups are preparing for their graduation day which will be a community event that enhances the visibility of their achievement and highlight the importance of women’s education, especially in underprivileged areas. |
| **Activity 2.2. Organize Awareness Sessions:**1. **RH services.**  A group of key influential women in *Ardeh* (highly educated, and wives of local decision makers and businessmen) participated in an RH awareness session focusing on the importance of RH and the key role of women in maintaining it. The session was approached in an informal brunch style were interactive discussion with a specialist took place. 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.
2. **Breast Cancer.** Also women of*Bint Jbeil* and *Aytaroun* communities participated to a breast cancer campaign. Each woman attending a lecture on the subject has the right to a free medical service (mammography) offered by the project.
3. **Back Pain.** Women from the local communities of *Aytaroun* and *Beyt Lahiya* cluster participated to training on preventive measures for back and neck pain. Given the importance of the topic for women they requested to re-implement the training to multiply the effect reaching for a wider audience.
 |
| **Activity 2.3. Conduct Focus group for healthier relation between mothers and teenagers.** A group of 15 mothers from *Beyt Lahiya* cluster is participating in a capacity building training on parenting skills. The training targets mothers of children under 12 years old.  |
| **Activity 2.4.** **Honor Elderly Women.** The women committee of *Sibil* implemented a huge event in the village center honoring its elderly women. This event aimed at addressing the growing need for care and attention for the elderly women in the village. It was also a chance for the committee to implement a successful public activity that increased its visibility and boosted their morale. The activity was a great success gathering the majority of the village with its entire influential people and was attended by religious men, spouses of women, and Y-PEERs of Sibil.  |
| **Activity 2.5 Launch the Woman NGO in Ras Baalback through live play “Inti..Hiyi”.** The women NGO of *Ras Baalback* presented the journey that lead to them becoming 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 the play on gender issues based on material produced by the project concluded the day.  |
| **Activity 2.6.** **Organize** C**ommunity mobilization Iftar.** An “Iftar” was organized in the village of *Kantara* gathering all the women committee along with their husbands and families with the participation of key leaders in the community. This event intended to mobilize the community around the committee and to gather the support of men for its future efforts and activities**,** especially that the *Kantara* women committee is heading towards sustainability. Also the coordinators, the trainers and the learners 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 to women tobacco growers to rest and feel the solidarity among themselves. |
| **Activity 2.8. Organize Forum theatre on Gender Based Violence.** A forum theatre on GBV was implemented in the village of *Kantara* in 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. This was also 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. |

|  |
| --- |
| *Output 3: Capacities for Women Economic Empowerment promoted and strengthened* |
| **Activity 3.1.** **Conduct Focus Group Discussions.** Women from *Beyt Lahiya* cluster participated to a focus group discussion on the economic empowerment component. The participants are women who already have a business of their own or who are willing to start their own businesses.  |
| **Activity 3.2. Provide Vocational Training.** Interested women in the village of *Kantara* met with a marketing specialist and identified a vocational training that would benefit them all. The selection criteria took into consideration the potential market for this new skill and business in the area and the women readiness to undertake such training. During a period of one month women were trained on designing and arranging candles, chocolate, and glass. In *Aytaroun* women participated to a training on chocolate, soap, and candle design.Women of *Deir Mima* community participated to a training on quality control and food safety in addition to learning new recipes |
| **Activity 3.3: Provide Basic Management Training.** The basic management training was provided to the women of *Kantara* participating in the vocational training. Taking into consideration the characteristics of the participating women and their enthusiasm to start practical work, a training program was developed in a way alternating between theoretical and hands-on sessions. That way ensured the participation of women in all sessions and equipped them with the essential knowledge and skills.Also women from *Aytaroun* participated to training on business management. Most of the women are part of a local cooperative the others want to start their own business. |
|  **Activity 3.4.** **Develop capacities on Family and Personal Budget.** Women in the village of *Ardeh* met on 2 occasions 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.  |
| **Activity 3.5.** **Conduct Group Consultation.** Group consultation was conducted for the women of *Nabatiyeh* and *Bint Jbeil* regarding the production process. |
| **Activity 3.6. Provide Group Loan.** A total of 7 micro credits were approved.In *Bint Jbeil:* * Group one: composed of women owning a cloth shop, shoes shop and make up business
* Group two: composed of a woman owning a gift shop and 3 women owning each one a food process business
* Group three: composed of 3 women owning a food process business and a dressmaking business
* Group four: composed of 2 women having a food process business and a dress maker

In *Aytaroun*:* Group one: composed of 4 women; two of them have food process businesses and the rest of them own handy craft businesses. This group is having a group loan for a second time
* Group two: composed of 3 women; 2 of them have handy craft businesses, the third one has a food process business.

In *Doueir*: * Group one: composed of 3 women ; two of them own food process businesses and the third one is a tailor
 |
| **Activity 3.7. Provide Individual Loan.** A total of 8 micro credits were approved. In *Bint Jbeil*: beauty salon, handy craft business, dress making business and a hair dresser businessIn *Aytaroun*: cloth shop In *Gaziyeh*: a woman who owns a driving lessons businessIn *Doueir*: after paying her first loan, a woman who owns a lingerie shop took another one (higher sum) to develop her business. A woman who owns a chocolate design business was provided with a loan |
| **Activity 3.8.** **Organize Coaching in Marketing.** A national event/forum will be organized during December to promote the products produces by women beneficiaries of micro credit and training. The women are being coached by experts to enhance quality and display of goods for participating in this national marketing event.Meetings were held in each village to give details of the upcoming forum and to assess local women’s products.  |

|  |
| --- |
| *Output 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* |
| **Activity 4.1. Develop Capacities of Y-PEERs.** As part of the project commitment to support the Y-PEER network, selected women committees identified participants to attend training with Y-PEERs on Peer education in reproductive health and HIV/AIDS.  |

|  |
| --- |
| *Output 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* |
| **Activity 5.1. Revise and update the 1997 “National Woman Strategy”.**  The update of the strategy is in the last phase of collecting information through consultative meetings with NGOs and relative stakeholders.  |
| **Activity 5.2. Document the project’s lessons learned and Best Practices.** The resource person sub-contracted to document the best practices conducted field trips to the project villages and met with women committees, key community actors, and project’s partners, to document process and capture good practices. She also met with UNFPA CO for the same purpose. The work is in progress.  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Performance Indicators as per LRF workplan for the current reporting period** |
| * 34 women provided with Business Development Service package
* 18 women attended a vocational training on designing and arranging candles, chocolate, and glass
* 14 women gained skills on chocolate, soap, and candle design
* 10 women acquired knowledge and skills on family budgeting
* 35 women participated to a focus group discussion on the economic component
* 11 women acquired knowledge on quality control and food safety in addition to learning new recipes
* 8 women obtained individual loans
* 7 groups of women (24 women)obtained group loans
* 14 women were provided a group consultation for new business initiatives
* 5 women renewed their loans for a bigger amount
* 180 men, women and youth participated in public discussions and sensitized on GBV
* 300 men, women, and youth participated in honoring elderly women
* 85 women attended awareness sessions on preventive measures for back and neck pain in addition to practical physical exercises
* 100 women were sensitized and gained knowledge on breast cancer and had access to a free medical service (mammography)
* 1 women committee acquired skills and knowledge about strategic planning and developed its own plan
* 40 women were sensitized on the concept of accepting others differences
* 13 women gained further knowledge on understanding, and ways of analyzing and managing conflicts
* 15 mothers are gaining knowledge on parenting skills
* 134 men and woman enhanced their solidarity relations through community mobilization iftars
 |

* 1. **Implementation Constrains**

There was no implementation constrains on the national level at this stage except the challenge of time management with the time of Ramadan and summer season full of engagements.

At the **local level** of implementation, there are few constrains summarized as follows: a) the training plan to support women committees towards sustainability is a demanding plan in terms of financial obligations and time requirement for implementation. The project has been cautious in prioritizing the training needs, which are still demanding given the lack of experience of the women committees in social and development work; b) 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. This is the specific case of *Beit Lahya*, and is slightly experienced in *Kantara*. The decision might be to divide the committed participants into two or three additional group if budget allows; c) the high interest rate of micro credit, and expectations of most communities that credits are in form of grants affected the enthusiasm of women to engage in loans; d) in communities where religion plays a major role in people's life, the religious leader interfered to hold back women from taking micro credit assuming that interest rate is a religious sin. Nevertheless the women who are living under poverty line decided to stand for themselves without any interference from the project. The case was in *Yarine*.

On the other hand the ability of the women committees to mobilize people to attend their activities is continuously growing, and more people are interested to know what they are planning as future events. This hard work and commitment helped them also to maintain the support of key individuals in their communities and achieve higher men participation. Furthermore, the women committee of *Sibil* succeeded to meet on various occasions without the coordination and presence of the training coordinator. This fact showed a potential for independency and seriousness of work. In addition, they were able, with the trainers’ help, to develop a personal strategic plan encompassing their NGO’s goals, mission, vision, and activities. The outreach scope of this new organization is not only going to be limited to their own village but will also reach other villages in their Caza.

* 1. **Impact Asesssment**

Although women committee from *Beyt Lahiya* cluster are for the most of them poor, they invited the project staff to lunch in a restaurant because they wanted to show their gratitude towards the project especially that it is the first and only project in the region that addresses women.

Women in certain communities live in a much closed environment, they think of people from other regions that they are very different and they get surprised when they find out that they got a lot in common. For example they were surprised to see that other people than them dance well the traditional dance “Dabke”. The project is giving these women the opportunity to get exposed to other people and to realize that after all despite their differences, Lebanese people have a lot in common.

Women are beginning to talk openly about their fears. During the conflict resolution training in *Kfeir*, a group of the women committee expressed in a sensitive way their fear that the political group of the rest of the committee would interfere in the decision making of the women cooperative. It was the first time that women would discuss such sensitive topic when usually they would elude it because it might generate a conflict between the two communities of Kfeir village.

* 1. **Challenges Faced**

Challenges vary from one community to another, and they are summarized to reflect realities in each community:

* The challenge in *Ardeh* was to widen the circle of participants and reach out for women outside of the committee and their relatives. Rarely people in that community gets involved in public events or social development issues.
* The women community of *Sibil* is very committed and motivated to start functioning as an independent entity satisfying the various needs of its community. The long process demanded to reach sustainability is challenging the committee and increasing its eagerness for rapid tangible outputs and big visible events.
* Identifying an appropriate vocational training in *Kantara* presented a challenge for the participating women and the experts. First, there were limited options for what works in the area. Second, the expressed needs of the community were different than the market needs and the expert experience.
* The project stopped all its activities during the month of Ramadan in Muslim communities which delayed the implementation of several activities
* During summer time, most of the communities were not available or committed to the project activities because they were busy attending marriages or making their own food products.
* Limitation of places suitable for training in *Beyt Lahiya* cluster is sometimes challenging because women would consider that the project is discriminating between the villages when the implementation of an activity takes place in a village rather than the other.
	1. **Lessons learned**
* The training location is very essential and challenging to attain a successful training. But when inside the village the women are often interrupted, and if it was far some cannot attend. For that purpose it is best to plan trainings in nearby locations where women have the choice to either sleep or come back home.
* Women committees and especially those aiming towards sustainability are always in need for big visibility events. Organizing big and successful events in their communities would increase their credibility and their motivation.
* Providinga free medical service increases the mobilization to the project’s activities therefore it enhances its visibility.
* On the issue of vocational training, often the women have their own specialized know how of things and informal techniques which would be beneficial to share with others.
	1. **Good Practices and Successful Stories**
* After taking the vocational training on design and arrangement of chocolate, the women of *Kantara* joined their efforts to do all the design work for the wedding of one of woman committee’s daughter.
* The women committee of *Ardeh* was invited to a wedding in the village the same day as the family budget training. They all showed up at the training fully dressed with their make-up on to show their commitment and potential to be multi-tasked individuals.
* The vocational and basic management training program extended over a one month period three to four times a week. All the participants attended every day of the program which reflected the amount of motivation and time commitment they can invest when they are provided with a chance to develop.
* The interactive approach used in the GBV forum theatre created an opportunity for the participation of different age groups in the village of *Kantara*. The audience combined men and women for the first time along with youth which enriched the debate and provided it with multi-perspectives. It was also important that the key leaders in the community attended the event, actively participated in the discussions, and showed their support to the women committee.
* Being honored in *Sibil* was a chance for most of the elderly women to leave their houses and meet their peers that they haven’t seen in long years. The scene was very touching for the elderly themselves and for the whole community
* The capacity building on parenting skills is beginning to make a positive impact on the women. In a community where women marry early without any preparation for their parenting role, the participants are acknowledging the importance of this training. “*I got married at 17 I had my first child at 18 and I think that I failed in raising him because I was very young. Thanks to these training sessions I feel more capable now to deal with my children”*.Another woman said “*I learned that I should let each daughter have her own personality, and that I don’t have to impose on them my own perception of how daughters should be*”.
* A local coordinator of the literacy program was very stressed because she wanted to present an exam on a national level (Civil Service) to enter the public field as a teacher. She did very well because the questions of the tests were about the difference between the old and the new methodology in education and the role of the teacher. She said “*if I pass the tests it would be because of you … because everything I wrote is from what I have learnt from the literacy training and popular education, and from my own experience as a coordinator of Yarine literacy group*”.
* During Ramadan, the coordinators, trainers and learners were gathered over an “Iftar”. One of the trainers who was involved only at the beginning of the training of coordinators a year ago, expressed her happiness to see them all so advanced ..”*they are more self-assured and express themselves easily - surprisingly empowered…”*  were her words.
* Women of the literacy program are eager to receive their literacy certificates so they would show them off to their husbands who at first were not supportive but eventually changed their attitude.
* One of the women in *Yarine* literacy group was granted divorce after a fatal abusive act from her husband who has been abusive for years. She said that she gained the strength to fight for her right of the literacy group and the support of the other women in her community.
* The forum theatre is a good way to increase the visibility of the project; it is also a fun yet an effective way to spread knowledge on GBV. It also motivates and encourages people to talk about a taboo subject.

**FUTURE WORKPLAN**

For the period October– December 2009, the following activities are planned to take place:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Immediate Objectives/outputs and activities | Months |
| 01 | 02 | 03 |
| *Output 1: Technical and Institutional Capacities of Women Machineries, Municipal Councils, and Organizations for advocacy, policy development and networking towards women’s advancement strengthened*  |
| Activity 1.1. Organize capacity building training for NCLW staff members  | X | x | X |
| Activity 1.2. Sensitize new staff, NCLW board members on SCR 1325 and project related themes |  |  | X |
| Activity 1.4. Create and build capacities of women committees | X | X | X |
| Activity 1.5. Train women committees towards sustainable entities | X | X | X |
| *Output 2: Outreach, Awareness Raising, Community Mobilization on SCR 1325 as well as comprehensive service package (health, GBV, literacy, and life skills)* |
| Activity 2.1. Continue literacy program  | X | X | X |
| Activity 2.2. Organize awareness sessions on RH services | x | x | X |
| Activity 2.3. Engage men on gender issues |  | x | X |
| Activity 2.4. Organize training on computer literacy | x | x | X |
| Activity 2.9. Organize training for Health Care Providers on RH +GBV related issues |  | X |  |
| *Output 3: Capacities for Women Economic Empowerment promoted and strengthened*  |
| Activity 3.1. Organize a national marketing forum for beneficiaries of business training and micro credit  |  |  | X |
| Activity 3.2. Coach women on quality and presentation of goods to be sold | x | x |  |
| Activity 3.3. Train women on economic components (feasibility study, business plan, marketing strategy etc...) | x | x | X |
| Activity 3.4. Implement vocational training  | x | x | X |
| Activity 3.5. Provide Micro Credit for women who have the capacity to sustain an income generating project | x | x | X |
| Activity 3.6 Support beneficiaries of micro credit to participate in exchange of experience and marketing event in Jordan (TBC) |  |  |  |
| *Output 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* |
| Activity 4.1. Continue support expansion of Y-PEER in selected communities and linkage to (Y-PEER) project | X | x | x |
| *Output 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* |
| Activity 5.1.Continue to Revise and update the 1997 “National Women Strategy”  | X | X | X |
| Activity 5.2. Continue documentation and best practices of Project  | x | x | x |