

# Networks of Peace

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# Background

- For years, Bekaa, a major part of the Republic of Lebanon, has been facing the pressures of a society that is deeply and vertically divided along sectarian lines in which the threat of relapse into conflict is constant. Being a home base of a diverse array of rivaling confessional groups (mainly Sunni and Shiite) in close proximity to one another with direct response to any repercussions from external powers has positioned the region as a convenient central hub for lawlessness, illiteracy, poverty and ignorance, often leaving its inhabitants fragmented along fault lines, partitioned against coalitions, and cut off from development initiatives, proper education, funding, or even supplies.

# Background

- Thus, several factors contribute to the susceptibility of such a fragile region to conflict; its geographic location, social make-up, insufficient NGO performance, economic realities, political instability, absence of infrastructure and educational policies are among the most prominent.

# Objectives

Introduce a system of re-bridging the society according to common needs, resources and interests, thus transforming the conflict into social stabilizing mechanisms.

Claim to provide basic services in preparation for the persistence of the citizens in their hometowns.

# Challenges

- Building trust between conflicting parties (tension due to sectarian and political division)
- Realizing a peaceful debate (negative attitude towards dialogue, tribal mind and behavior toward conflict resolution)
- Fulfillment of community needs (role of government, city councils, INGOs, local NGOs)

# Perspectives and Needs

Target groups consider themselves as community mobilizer and activists in the public affairs who seek to spread the theory of peace building and reduce conflict in the area.

The most important mission for target groups is to transform the conflict and to have the skills to define the basic needs of the community.

# Partners

- Partners are essential in the project to enhance the reach out to society. Local governments, city councils and civil society are taking a role of coordination and contribution with the VMCs. Furthermore, municipalities are very cooperative with the VMCs, and they helped them to reduce all difficulties and challenges.

# German Contribution

- Sharing experience and providing support to the local NGOs, city councils, public institutions pertaining to responsiveness to the citizens' basic needs.
- Therefore, it is very important that German institutions cooperate financially to provide services to the local community.