SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND

LEBANON STRATEGY
2017 - 2021
The goal of Search for Common Ground is to promote a sustainable culture of peace, dialogue, and inclusion across communities in Lebanon:

We believe that a sustainable culture of peace is something a society continually strives towards. It is one where there are deep-seated social norms and values that encourage people to approach opportunities, differences, and challenges in a collaborative and constructive way.

We support those who champion dialogue and inclusion. This work involves bringing people together from different backgrounds and positions, so that they can speak and be heard in a safe and healthy process in order to discover one another’s point of view and share common experiences and interests.

We refer to communities across Lebanon in a broad sense. We engage with communities who are bonded by their sect, nationality, gender, age, profession, or socioeconomic background. While we can understand our differences, we must also act on our commonalities, and notably on our shared humanity.

Based on the root causes of conflicts we have highlighted in this document, we plan to achieve our goal by applying the Common Ground Approach to four key pillars:

- Social Cohesion
- Peace & Gender
- Peace Education
- Inclusive Governance

To access further information on Search’s work in Lebanon, please visit our website at https://www.sfcg.org/lebanon
INTRODUCTION TO SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND

While conflict is inevitable, violence is not. When we deal with conflict collaboratively, it can catalyze positive change, progress, inclusivity and prosperity. By transforming a conflict, we build collaborative relationships which enable people to work together around shared needs to pursue win-win outcomes. Search for Common Ground's mission is to transform the way the world deals with conflict; away from adversarial approaches and towards collaborative solutions. We do this through the Common Ground Approach (CGA). Tested and refined over 24 years, the CGA enables people to transform their relationships, moving from adversarial towards collaborative approaches to conflict.

The Common Ground Approach (CGA) is the methodology that Search employs to transform conflicts away from adversarial approaches toward collaborative processes. Supremely versatile, the Common Ground Approach is applicable to any context, guided by these principles:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Center programming on the transformation of people</th>
<th>Tackle root causes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Be inclusive</td>
<td>Be practical</td>
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<td>Start with shared interests</td>
<td>Be creative</td>
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<td>Be rooted in local context</td>
<td>Make long-term commitments</td>
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<td>Adapt to unfolding circumstances and insights</td>
<td>Inspire hope</td>
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As explained in our global strategy, we find that the CGA becomes self-perpetuating when its rewards align with the goals and aspiration of individuals, communities, or institutions. We also believe that this change becomes durable and enduring when: INSTITUTIONS reflect this change; SOCIAL NORMS encourage and celebrate the change; or MARKETS resource this change.

SEARCH’S WORK AROUND THE WORLD

Mozaik is a multicultural bilingual pre-school program that provides an alternative approach to children's socialization in Macedonia, encouraging different ethnic communities to collaborate in order to build trust in their everyday relationships. Over the past twenty years children have attended Mozaik programs in what are the only bilingual pre-schools available in the country, so that language can be a connector, rather than a divider. Mozaik eventually changed the institutions in Macedonia in order to deliver an enduring impact, as in 2012 the program became institutionalized as a part of the country's educational system.

Founded in 1995, Studio Ijambo served a crucial role in national reconciliation as Burundi was coming out of an ethnically charged civil war. Studio Ijambo broadcasted programs aimed at creating an open political dialogue to demobilize and reconcile former combatants. Since then, the Studio has helped ease the tension during some of Burundi’s most trying moments. Studio Ijambo has not only transformed Burundi’s media landscape, but has also shifted the social norms in the country towards accepting dialogue. In particular, Studio Ijambo promotes the idea that a hero is someone who protects and respects people from different backgrounds.
WORKING WITH A NEW GENERATION OF PEACE LEADERS

PHASE I: Working with changemakers

In 1996, as Lebanon recovered from civil war, Search organized a conflict transformation workshop for a group of emerging peacebuilders. They came together to discuss the future of their country, and the role they could play in transcending deep divisions. Over two decades later, participants testify to the fact that this experience had a profound effect on them and helped shaped the course of their professional lives. Not only did they experience a personal change, but they brought that change to their wider society – some served with distinction in government, others became world-class mediators, and many formed their own organizations reaching countless others.

“The mediation workshops of 1996 were ground-breaking in introducing global perspectives on mediation to Lebanon, inspired by the South African context — in itself a South-South collaboration. The training set in motion a chain reaction that led to the growth of the field of peacebuilding and conflict resolution and the birth of the Lebanon Conflict Resolution Network (LCRN). To this day, these two training workshops remain the most significant capacity building events that have taken place in postwar Lebanon.”

- WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT

PHASE II: Media and Peace Education

Search opened a permanent office in Lebanon in 2008 to tackle longstanding conflicts in the country, in particular those linked to sectarianism. Working with youth, the media, and the public sector, we sought to promote a common sense of identity. We worked with schools and extracurricular groups like scouts to provide peacebuilding content and capacity building for the educators, and also produced television soap operas (such as “The Team” and “Kilna bil Haye”) to reach millions of people through mass media, with programming intended to start a conversation about the challenges and opportunities of living in a diverse society.

“I’ve been postponing the moment of talking about the identity issue with my daughter, but now it’s time to have it.”

- FATHER OF VIDEO WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT
RESPONDING TO CRISIS

With the onset of the Syrian crisis and with Lebanon suddenly hosting the highest number of refugees per capita in the world, in 2012 Search began to develop programs to mitigate tensions between refugees and host communities. We employed a whole of society approach, engaging with local leaders, communities, youth, and children to provide opportunities for Lebanese and Syrians to address common challenges in a collaborative manner. However, we never lost sight of the importance of working on longstanding intra-Lebanese issues, applying the CGA to local governance, relations between security forces and civilians, and women’s empowerment among other areas.

ADDRESSING ROOT CAUSES

As of 2016, Search-Lebanon entered a fourth phase with a multi-year strategy for 2017 to 2021, with a renewed focus on the root causes of long-standing conflict issues and through programming representative of the diverse population in Lebanon. This document lays out the foundations of this long-term strategy.

“Young people are the future of any community.”

RUBA, A YOUTH MASTER FACILITATOR

In Sarafand, Lebanese and Syrian participants in a Search program launched a garbage collection and recycling initiative – a primary need and source of tension in the community. Project participants led an initiative that became sustainable by selling the collected garbage to companies, and built new and trusting relationships between participants.

Youth participants who indicated that they could initiate activities that promote living together peacefully and respectfully in their communities.
3. CONTEXT ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

Lebanon, nestled on the eastern Mediterranean coast, has a turbulent history. Periods of booming prosperity and entrepreneurial success alternate with times of violent armed conflict. The country boasts a great religious and ethnic diversity, with 18 different sectarian groups calling Lebanon their home. During the civil war, from 1975 to 1990, as well as in the post-war era which lacked an adequate reconciliation process, these groups were often pitted against each other, which created a highly volatile climate. Too often, leaders and members of the different groups highlight their differences instead of building on their commonalities. This “politicization” of the relationships between different sectarian groups has kept the tensions of the civil war alive and prevented the transformation of a fragile peace to a more inclusive and enduring one. The power-sharing mechanism, established at the achievement of independence in 1943 and revised in the 1989's Ta'if Agreement to end the civil war, has created both a precarious peace equilibrium as well as an increased potential for renewed violence, in that the root causes of conflict are left unaddressed. Another crucial destabilizing factor is the presence of more than two million refugees from neighboring Syria and Palestine. Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, Lebanon's population of approximately 4 million inhabitants has increased by over 30%. Today, Lebanon hosts the highest number of refugees per capita in the world, placing increased demands on an already struggling system of service provision and governance, and leading to ever increasing tensions between refugees and host communities. Both the historical legacy and more recent events create tensions that must be addressed in order to transform the already fertile ground for violent conflicts.

4. KEY DYNAMICS & ROOT CAUSES OF CONFLICT

Search has identified four key conflict dynamics that we believe contribute to a lack of enduring peace in Lebanon:

1. **Sectarian tensions** have accompanied the modern Lebanese state for decades and created deep-seated, intra-group mistrust. This occasionally ignites into periods of armed conflict, most notably the civil war, but also episodes in the late 1950s and in 2008. The incredible diversity of Lebanese society need not be destructive, however, as sectarian-based identities are not in and of themselves damaging. The challenge Lebanon faces is that people's allegiance to their sectarian identity largely overrides allegiance to a national identity, or to shared values, principles, and practices that can help the state and society progress. Sectarian identity regulates political representation, guarantees protection of identity, leads service provision in case of state failure, determines issues such as marriage and inheritance, and has reinforced positions of leadership and shapes relationships between those leaders and their constituents. Moreover, using sectarian affiliation as the primary distinguishing characteristic for people in society perpetuates discrimination on the basis of sectarian identity. Further, sectarian divisions are visible in the absence of a common historical narrative and different takes on crucial moments in Lebanese history, as exemplified by the lack of an official agreed date for the end of the war, and hence the strong influence of each group's narratives on relationships between the different communities.

Both a cause and consequence of these factors is that sectarianism becomes the only identity-based relationship that people can trust, which undermines the construction of a cohesive state based on constitutional norms, rule of law, and participatory governance.

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As a consequence, these sectarian tensions serve as the foundation for the governance system in Lebanon. Palliating the lack of central and inclusive governance, sectarian leaders secure their constituencies’ support by the means of providing basic services and protecting their group identity. By presenting himself as the protector of his group, the za‘im creates a scenario with no viable alternative to the sectarian system, making people hesitant to move on to a more inclusive governance model. The current system has been characterized as having low levels of accountability and transparency, lack of inclusivity for political processes, and high levels of corruption. This further hinders civic engagement, restricts rule of law, and limits the inclusivity of citizenship. Also, the concentration of power in the hands of a sectarian leadership leads to a high level of power concentration and lack of autonomy for local government structures to play an effective role. This then makes the Lebanese state susceptible to incidences of ineffectiveness and corruption³. Low levels of engagement within the political system lead to a lack of identification with the state and limited responsibility for political decisions, which can then lead to apathy and absence of a common narrative. This, in turn, further decreases the level of trust of citizens in the state and negatively affects social cohesion. Addressing these issues and increasing citizens engagement with the state thus becomes crucial.

Economic, social, and legal inequalities, as well as lack of inclusion, are significant drivers of conflict. Economically, around 1 million Lebanese lived below the poverty line before 2012⁴, with further economic pressure placed on the system as a result of the refugee influx⁵. Inequality on the basis of gender, nationality, and socioeconomic background creates a society with difficulties of access to livelihood, real estate, and justice for some of the most vulnerable people in the country. In addition, while Lebanon is often praised as a country where women enjoy some of the greatest protections of their rights and freedoms in the Middle East, institutionalized and deeply engrained gender inequality is widespread and presents a significant risk in terms of future peace. Inequality and exclusion extends into the political sphere as well, as sectarian quotas determine the distribution of political, administrative, and legal mandates. These factors create a fundamental idea that some Lebanese are worth more than others, which is a powerful cause of and trigger for conflict. Lebanon, however, often described as a merchant society⁶, has the enormous potential of young, well-educated entrepreneurs who could contribute to a more prosperous future – reducing frustration and conflict potential in the process. What is therefore needed is a more inclusive and balanced distribution of wealth and access to social, political, and economic opportunities and rights for all people in Lebanon.

Lebanon, home to 4 million people prior the Syrian conflict in 2011, has taken in more than 1.5 million Syrian refugees⁷, adding to 450,000 Palestinians registered in the country⁸ and creating a strain on social cohesion. Following an initially warmer welcome among many Lebanese for refugees fleeing violence, economic strains as described above have led to a progressively deteriorating situation. In addition to socio-economic and political effects from this influx of people, the modern history of Syria and Lebanon provides a fertile breeding ground for future conflicts between its citizens. As Syria acted as an occupying power in Lebanon until as recently as 2005, a large majority of Lebanese have memories of the occupation, with cases of personal loss and hardship influencing their perspective of the ‘other.’ These perspectives fuel the groups’ narratives and tend to reinforce pre-existing conflict lines. These narratives then fuel resentments of host and refugee communities against each other. Lastly, different political groups in Lebanon at times support opposing sides in the Syrian conflict, which further fuels tensions and can lead to increased conflict in the future.

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3 za‘im = sectarian leader
4 A recent Gallup Poll found that 90% of respondents in Lebanon felt that corruption is widespread throughout the government.
6 The World Bank estimates that 170,000 Lebanese have fallen into poverty due to the Syrian crisis (http://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/impact-of-the-syrian-crisis#2). However, UNDP has also highlighted the economic benefits that the presence of Syrian refugees brings (file:///C:/Users/cholmquist/Downloads/PEACE%20BUILDING%2016%20july%202017%20p7.pdf)
Supremely versatile, the Common Ground Approach is applicable to any context. As per our global strategy and in line with our findings and consultations with our partners in Lebanon, we are guided by the following principles:

**Center programming on the transformation of people.** We build skills and enable relationships to shift through lived experiences of collaboration. The human journey of transformation is at the heart of our approach, and is not subordinated to other goals or causes.

**Be inclusive.** Our approach includes all who have a stake in the conflict in the transformative process of imagining and seeking solutions, making the outcome accepted and durable. Inclusion begins at the early stages of assessment and design.

**Start with shared interests.** When we enable people to reframe the conflict, tackling the problem rather than each other, they identify and build on shared interests, generating new opportunities. Rather than encouraging parties to compromise where they differ, we start by identifying shared interests, and build collaboration around commonalities.

**Be rooted in local context.** Each conflict is unique and caused by locally and globally driven social, political, and cultural factors. Our strategies are rooted in an analysis of the dynamics in each place and inspired by the insight and vision of those who are directly involved.

**Adapt to unfolding circumstances and insights.** Conflict dynamics shift rapidly. We design programming to respond to changes so that our engagement is consistently relevant. Learning, reflecting, and adapting is at the core of our approach.

**Tackle root causes.** Conflict and violence exist within larger power dynamics, historical relationships, and systems. We frame our work to enable parties in conflict to address root causes, not just visible symptoms. We engage on multiple levels of society, targeting specific changes which can catalyze larger systemic changes.

**Be practical.** Cooperation deepens relationships, and healthy relationships foster cooperation. Through lived experiences of collaboration, prejudice decreases and trust is built. As stakeholders identify practical, concrete avenues of collaboration, they build the skills and trust to discover and generate previously-unseen or unimaginable possibilities.

**Be creative.** We employ creative and culturally relevant ways to captivate attention, set trends, shift norms, and encourage collaborative approaches. We embrace innovative and entrepreneurial programming which generate new connections and enable previously-unimagined breakthroughs.

**Make long-term commitments.** Shifting social norms and institutions takes time. We catalyze enduring change through a long-term commitment to the stakeholders and processes, recognizing that change is often incremental and rarely linear.

**Inspire hope.** People often respond to conflict with fear, avoidance, or aggression. We keep hope at the forefront, enabling individuals and groups to experience new realities, gradually growing their confidence and mutual trust.

It is a testament to the effectiveness of the Common Ground Approach that over the past 10-15 years, some elements that were previously unique and distinctive to Search for Common Ground have been adopted and mainstreamed not only within the peacebuilding field, but also within the larger international development and humanitarian sector. This includes the adoption of inclusive program planning and design that engages stakeholders throughout the process and encourages the use of certain tools such as dramatic media for social change. However, the Common Ground Approach remains distinctive in the peacebuilding field in several ways:
The ultimate outcome Search seeks in its global strategy is ‘safer, healthier and more just societies.’ In line with this, our goal for Lebanon is to promote a sustainable culture of peace, dialogue, and inclusion across communities in Lebanon:

- We believe that a sustainable culture of peace is something a society continually strives towards. It is one where there are deep-seated social norms and values that encourage people to approach opportunities, differences, and challenges in a collaborative and constructive way.
- We support those who champion dialogue and inclusion. This work involves bringing people together from different backgrounds and positions, so that they can speak and be heard in a safe and healthy process, in order to discover one another's point of view and share common experiences and interests.
- We refer to communities across Lebanon in a broad sense. We engage with communities who are bonded by their sect, nationality, gender, age, profession, or socioeconomic background. While we can understand our differences, we must also act on our commonalities, and notably on our shared humanity.

Based on the root causes of conflicts, we plan to achieve our goal by applying the Common Ground Approach to four key pillars: Social Cohesion, Peace & Gender, Peace Education, and Inclusive Governance.

Our work is primarily guided by five theories of change, adapted from the multi-party action-reflection process called Reflecting on the Practice of Peace:

- **INDIVIDUAL CHANGE:** Peace comes through transformative change of a critical mass of individuals, their consciousness, attitudes, behaviors, and skills.
- **HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND CONNECTIONS:** Peace emerges out of a process of breaking down isolation, polarization, division, prejudice and stereotypes between and among groups. Strong relationships are necessary for peacebuilding.
- **PUBLIC ATTITUDES:** Violence and tensions are partly motivated by prejudice, misperceptions, and intolerance of difference. We can promote peace by using the media to change public attitudes and build greater tolerance in society.
- **GRASSROOTS MOBILIZATION:** “When the people lead, the leaders will follow.” If we mobilize enough energy at the grassroots level promoting cooperation and understanding, political leadership will pay attention.
- **INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** Peace can be secured when social institutions are inclusive, responsive, and interact effectively with local community members.

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10 Adapted from Peter Woodrow, Strategic Analysis for Peace-Building Programmes, cited by Church, C and Rogers, M. Designing for Results: Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation in Conflict Transformation Programmes, Search for Common Ground, Washington (2006)
PILLARS

PILLAR I: SOCIAL COHESION

Lebanon is well-known for its incredibly diverse demographics with a population of 7,750,000 including over 1.5 million Syrian nationals and 450,000 Palestinian nationals. Religious groups constitute the major forces in the political system with 18 recognized religious sects and 19 parties deeply rooted in confessional segregation that spills over into the society as a whole. Old grudges reminiscent of the civil war, economic hardships, and deep-seated ethnic and religious diversities - reinforced by ongoing regional conflicts - foster a general tension throughout the country. As such, it is crucial to strive to build a more peaceful relationship between all the different communities residing in Lebanon while taking into account their histories and their needs.

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

Our overall goal is that different groups and individuals work together to seize opportunities and overcome challenges in their society. Our specific objectives for achieving this goal are to:

- Build healthy and collaborative relationships across societal dividing lines to increase trust
- Enable a greater understanding of the ‘other’ and identify shared needs
- Catalyze agency for collaborative problem solving at multiple levels of society

Cultural Heritage for Peacebuilding

While Lebanese cultural heritage is currently at threat, it also presents an opportunity to bring communities together around a shared identity. Search has therefore launched a project where different teams across the country will celebrate and promote their local heritage, and form a nationwide network sharing in and discovering parts of the country they otherwise may never visit. Through a large-scale social media campaign, we plan to provide an opportunity for all Lebanese to connect with their heritage and connect with each other.

Peacebuilding through the Arts

Search’s arts-based approach brings together Lebanese, Palestinian, and Syrian youth in summer camps and workshops, using the arts to break down barriers and promote collaboration. Together, participants learn to communicate through music, theatre, dance, and visual arts, and the art they produce is then showcased in community events in order to spread a positive message of tolerance and dialogue.

% of the youth leaders who believe that arts can be used as a tool for youth to understand themselves and each other

- START OF PROJECT: 64%
- END OF PROJECT: 95%

PROTECT CULTURAL HERITAGE

BUILD BRIDGES ACROSS DIVIDED LINES

PILLAR II: PEACE & GENDER

Numerous studies have shown the importance of women's inclusion for sustainable peace\textsuperscript{12}. In general, increasing respect for the interests of women has been found to reduce levels of violence\textsuperscript{13}, and in post-conflict contexts in particular, the participation of women in decision-making makes a relapse to violent conflict less likely\textsuperscript{14}. While Lebanon is often praised as the liberal exception in the wider region concerning the rights of women, institutionalized and deeply engrained gender inequality still manifests itself in the marginalization of women and girls in public and domestic life. Gender equality and human rights are not seen as central concerns and are pushed to the side by decision makers fostered by a patriarchal culture which affects political and social life. Thereby, this presents at best a missed opportunity to ensure future peace and stability, and at worst a major risk for a return to violence. Hence, peacebuilding efforts in Lebanon must also focus on addressing gender inequality and patriarchal social norms in order to promote women's inclusion and empowerment.

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

Our overall goal is to \textit{increase women's political, economic, and social participation for a more peaceful society}. Our specific objectives for achieving this goal are to:

- Encourage individual behavior that is respectful of women and demonstrates positive masculinity;
- Promote public attitudes that hold a fair and equal role for women and men in society;
- Increase cooperation between different stakeholders, male and female, to more effectively promote gender equality; and
- Empower key stakeholders, male and female, in calls for reducing economic, social, political, and legal constraints for women.

Search worked with numerous CSOs on the \textit{“Hakkik Damanik”} campaign to raise awareness about the unequal status of men and women in the National Social Security Law. Provocative images like the ones here, as well as TV spots and street activities, sought to shift attitudes to promote women's socio-economic empowerment.

\textbf{Madam President} is a TV series that follows the story of Government Minister Noura Sa'ad (played by Carmen Lebbos) after she involuntarily assumes the presidency of a fictional Arab country called Jabalein. Always a ‘hands on’ politician with a deep belief in her people, Noura faces considerable opposition from traditional colleagues, but manages to govern without losing her moral center. In parallel scenes, we follow a group of tech-savvy “twenty-somethings” trying to find their way in life in the wake of choking unemployment and regional strife. An out-of-work journalist leads the pack as she expresses their views through a nightly blog called “Dear Madam President…”

\textbf{SEARCH WORKED WITH}:


PILLAR III: PEACE EDUCATION

With 41% of its population under the age of 25, Lebanon has a high stake in the development of its young people\(^{15}\). This demographic was born after the end of the civil war, and has no personal memories of the war. However, children and youth are still affected by the narratives they hear from their parents and from the religious and political groups in the country. Witnessing the sectarian tensions that continue to influence people's perspectives, young people risk being drawn into a discourse that perpetuates mistrust and fosters harmful stereotypes. Therefore, both formal education and informal education - through the media, sports, culture, and recreational activities - play a crucial role in transforming conflict in Lebanon. As such, providing conflict sensitive education and learning for young people should be prioritized by encouraging young people and educators to act as leaders, role models, and influencers for peace in their communities. This will in turn encourage peacebuilders to emerge, day-by-day, through their lived experiences at school and through informal education.

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

Our overall goal is that \textit{learning and teaching empowers young people to transform conflict}. Our specific objectives for achieving this goal are that:

- Children and youth from different backgrounds learn together and develop lasting and respectful relationships;
- Children and youth learn conflict transformation principles through informal education;
- Schools and educators integrate conflict transformation principles into their curricula; and
- Young people and educators become leaders for peacebuilding in their community.

Traditional peacebuilding activities sometimes fail to captivate wide audiences. Therefore, Search always seeks new ways to reach people where they are already engaged. Videogames are of course immensely popular, creating a huge opportunity for our work. However, they are also largely synonymous with battles, guns, wars, villains, and mayhem. Therefore, Search created the video game \textit{Cedaria} in order to provide children and youth in Lebanon with a platform to learn and practice how to manage conflict, solve community problems collaboratively, and understand the perspectives of the ‘other.’ Search employs the game with educators across Lebanon so that youth can apply the lessons they learn in their daily lives.

We teach our children to share, play nice, and not hit each other – simple lessons that we sometimes forget as we grow older and life becomes more complicated. Search seeks to capitalize on the early stages of children’s development by providing afterschool classes and recreational activities that build their skills in conflict transformation through storytelling. We have brought together over 1,270 Lebanese, Palestinian, and Syrian children who not only learn these lessons, but in doing so have a tremendous impact on their teachers and parents as well. Find out more about the project on our \textit{YouTube} channel.

\(^{15}\) https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/le.html
PILLAR IV: INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE

Considering the importance of governance in addressing conflict, we see a need to work on three connected levels:

| AUTHORITIES                  | • Revenues and capacities of local and national government administrations to implement public services and projects.  
|                             | • Understanding of public and elected officials regarding their roles and responsibilities.  
| COMMUNITY MEMBERS            | • Knowledge of rights, roles, and responsibilities of ordinary citizens in local and national government processes  
|                             | • Participation in local governance, specially among marginalized populations.  
| CIVIL SOCIETY                | • Coherence and collaboration among civil society organizations.  
|                             | • Participatory approaches, responsiveness, and inclusivity in program implementation.  

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

Our overall goal is that government and citizens collaborate in inclusive processes that increase stability in the country. Our specific objectives for achieving this goal are to:

• Strengthen awareness of the rights, roles, and responsibilities of citizens, civil society organizations, and government;
• Improve collaboration between local leaders, civil society, and local communities in addressing local needs;
• Empower marginalized groups to participate more actively in decision-making; and
• Engage citizens in collaborative projects that benefit their communities.

Through the Aswat Faeela project, Search provides a comprehensive youth leadership program. Emphasizing the participation of those who are traditionally left out - such as young women, people with disability, and those with limited means or opportunities - we have engaged a core group of 10 Master Facilitators design their own learning journey, and then cascade their training to a further 100 Community Builders. Together, the two groups identify needs in their communities that they respond to with community projects or advocacy to local authorities.

Search implements dialogue initiatives that have brought together over 150 local leaders across the country. Through roundtable discussions, these leaders discuss community needs and collaborate on the design and implementation of initiatives that have benefitted over 1,500 people. This process fosters cooperative, community-led solutions to mitigate tensions and improve social stability.

% of participants who believe in finding practical and collaborative ways to address common challenges in the community

![Graph showing 80% belief at the end of the initiative and 35% at the start.](image)
CONCLUSION

8.

Search for Common Ground, with a mission to end violent conflict, focuses on the need to address the root causes of conflict in Lebanon. As established in this strategy, we believe that those root causes are primarily related to ongoing sectarian tensions, exclusive governance, inequality and a lack of inclusivity, and the further strain on social cohesion resulting from the crisis in Syria. Thereby, the greatest challenge facing the country lies in the deep divisions and the persistence of old grievances leading to low levels of trust within Lebanese society. In order to bridge the dividing lines, historical tensions, and unhealed wounds must be addressed at both the leadership and community levels so as to enhance collaboration around shared interests and build a healthier society.
END VIOLENT CONFLICT