May 2021 - Search for Common Ground (Search), and through its “Partners for Justice” project that is being implemented in partnership with ABAAD-Resource Center for Gender Equality (ABAAD), successfully engaged 16 youth and local civil society organizations (CSO) that operate in five different areas across Lebanon, including remote areas such as Wadi Khaled in the North and Arsal and Qaa in the Beqaa. These CSO are being actively engaged in all of the projects’ activities to reduce Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).

Under the project's first specific objective aiming at engaging men and boys to work positively with women and girls to become allies and champions of gender equality and prevention of VAWG, Search and ABAAD made headway in contributing towards the increase of target CSO participants’ skills in analyzing social constructions of masculinities and VAWG in a participatory manner, creating active agents who are promoting positive masculinities and preventing VAWG in the targeted areas by enhancing trust across dividing lines.

“Within the Partners for Justice project, Search has provided us with a safe space that we need to frankly express our feelings and thoughts in addition to learning different ways to deal with our stress and control it properly.

– Female Youth Leader, South Lebanon

Art work done by youth who participated in sessions on Program Ra delivered by youth leaders from Centre de Lecture et d’Animation Culturelle (CLAC) in Qaa’, Bekaa, Lebanon
In this context, the targeted thirty youth leaders who are representing their CSOs in the project were trained on Program Ra with ABAAD. Following the training, the youth leaders were given the opportunity to implement the Program Ra in their communities across Lebanon. This implementation has enabled them to champion gender programs in a collaborative and inclusive manner by engaging youth and adults in sessions to reflect on gender norms and gender equality in order to reinforce social cohesion. During the first quarter of 2021, youth leaders delivered sessions on Program Ra in their communities reaching a total of 227 youth and adults (73 males and 154 females), divided into groups aged between 24-15, and 24 and above, and from different nationalities including Lebanese, Palestinian, Syrian and Pakistani.

Through these sessions, the project helped a bigger number of youth and adults across Lebanon have a deeper understanding of gender issues, creating more advocates for positive and equitable masculinities and gender equality. On the other hand, the delivered sessions provided the participants with a safe space to express their thoughts, voice their concerns and to a great extent deeply discuss sensitive matters and societal perceptions regarding gender and popular masculinities’ practices as well as the opportunity to establish good connections and communications between each other.

"My participation in the implementation of these sessions with other members in my community made me more aware of and knowledgeable about many topics that are considered taboo in our society."

- Male youth leader, North Lebanon

This intensive work and continuous communication with the youth leaders in addition to the training provided led them to build strong relationships among each other. One of the youth leaders participating in the project is now actively advocating against the popular masculinities, practices in order to reduce the societal stereotyping related to these issues within the community. He too decided to go further and continue his advanced studies in gender, a trajectory that he wants to follow after his participation in the project.