YOUNG MEDIA PROFESSIONALS’ ENGAGEMENT IN GENDER AND MASCULINITIES CONCEPTS TRAINING

July 2021 - Search for Common Ground (Search) is implementing the Partners for Justice project in partnership with ABAAD-Resource Center for Gender Equality (ABAAD). Since the project’s start, Search and ABAAD have successfully trained 10 young media professionals from across five regions in Lebanon, and multiple nationalities, including Lebanese, Palestinian and Syrian, on Gender and Masculinities Concepts.

During the training, the young media professionals showed interest in exploring and learning about masculinities, femininities, gender and engaging men and boys for gender equality. New concepts. This was demonstrated by their active engagement and participation in discussions and activities. They shared personal and experiential examples to understand the difference between gender vs. sex, and how gender roles and media affected their early life experiences. During the training, and when participating in a session called “Gender Boxes”, the young media professionals noticed how gendered social norms are maintained in each box, and how violence is likely to occur when a person steps outside of their “assigned box”. The training helped the media professionals agree on the crucial role that the media plays in shifting perceptions and attitudes of the audience by adopting gender sensitive and equitable messages. It also created a neutral platform for each one of them to meet others from different backgrounds and different experiences. This allowed them to feel comfortable, build trust among each other and opened up to sharing their thoughts and feelings towards these sensitive issues. A bond was formed between these young people, enabling them to work together as a team despite all the differences that exist between them.

At the end of the training, their feedback reflected a great improvement in their knowledge and perceptions around gender equality, VAWG and masculinities' concepts. They showed a deeper understanding of how socialization is linked to gender related issues –

"I feel very lucky to have attended such a training. I am very happy with the knowledge I acquired and the new relationships I made. Media has a major role to play in having a gender equitable society, and I now feel hopeful and confident that the work we will do will be a great success!"

Having participated in this workshop helped me better reflect on the existing stereotypes in our community, and how this limits both, men and women, from thriving and living a fair life."
In line with the project's objective to shift the attitudes of community members in target areas around the permissibility of, and assumptions related to violence against women and girls (VAWG), the young media professionals will engage with youth leaders participating in the project to create, design, and implement a national awareness and advocacy media campaign to shed light on positive and equitable masculinities. Under the campaigns, the youth leaders will implement four different initiatives including theater shows, social experiments, and murals with the support of the young media professionals. These grassroot initiatives will ensure the dissemination of the campaign's messages in a creative way to reach community members in remote and vulnerable areas.

“Following this training, I gained:

“Humanity” – “Friendships” – “Inspiration” – “Respect for others and increased appreciation of my role in society” – “Understanding of equitable masculinities”

Search is the world's largest dedicated peacebuilding organization, and supports programming in 32 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, South America, the Middle East, and the United States. Search's mission is to transform the way the world deals with conflict from adversarial means to shared solutions. Search has worked in Lebanon since 1996 through a diverse array of programming, including social cohesion, peace education, and media production.

ABAAD is a non-governmental organization that aims to achieve gender equality as an essential condition to sustainable social and economic development in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region. ABAAD advocates for the development and implementation of policies and laws that enhance women's effective participation. With the purpose of ending gender-based violence, ABAAD further adopts a holistic care approach providing protection and support services to Gender Based Violence (GBV) survivors.