CHALLENGING THE PERCEPTIONS & ATTITUDES ON THE PERMISSIBILITY & JUSTIFICATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS THROUGH ART & MEDIA

November 2021 – Search for Common Ground (Search) is implementing the “Partners for Justice” project in partnership with ABAAD-Resource Centre for Gender Equality (ABAAD).

After the implementation of the initiative ‘Theatre for Equality’, the North team awarded the SFCG project team with an honorary medal to express their gratitude for the team’s efforts and support.

“Through this initiative, many participants were able to talk about the phenomenon of violence against women and girls and increase their consideration of equal rights.”

- 33 years old woman from Bekaa

Under the project’s second specific objective; Promoting a shift in communities’ attitudes in target areas around the permissibility of, and assumptions related to violence against women and girls (VAWG), Search and ABAAD implemented the Media for Social Change workshop with youth leaders and media professionals and equipped them with gender sensitivity and non-adversarial advocacy and campaigning skills. Following this activity, thirty youth leaders and ten media professionals implemented together four initiatives in five different regions in Lebanon with the aim at promoting the reduction of VAWG by addressing social dynamics that justify VAWG and/or perpetuate victim blaming. The initiatives created safe spaces for community members to reflect on the perceptions and attitudes towards masculinities and the permissibility or justification of all types of VAWG in target communities.

The initiatives were implemented across different Lebanese regions. Three murals were executed in three areas across the South, two theatre shows were implemented in Tripoli and the Bekaa, and one social experiment was conducted in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. The initiatives were attended by more than 500 community members (%67 females and %33 males).

A feedback community survey conducted with the attendees of the initiatives shows that %90 believe that these initiatives are relevant to raising awareness around VAWG in their community, and %83 believed that they could actually ignite change around VAWG in their community.
A feedback community survey conducted with the attendees of the initiatives shows that 90% believe that these initiatives are relevant to raising awareness around VAWG in their community, and 83% believed that they could actually ignite change around VAWG in their community.

The monitoring visit conducted by the SFCG MEAL team to one of the theatre shows captured feedback that reflected the inclusivity of the targeted community in the implementation process as well as the impact of this activity. Most of the attendees expressed their appreciation of attending such an activity which is a new and interesting spin on traditional awareness campaigns.

After launching each initiative, an open discussion about gender, gender roles and community perceptions and attitudes toward masculinities and violence’s permissibility and justification was held with attendees. As a result, one of the female participants in the Tripoli theater show was comfortable sharing her personal experience related to domestic violence and received the support of her fellow community members.

Impressed by the discussions that the mural in Tyre was able to ignite, one female attendee was encouraged to share her own art in which she also addresses VAWG.

The social experiment conducted in Beirut and Mount Lebanon aimed to raise awareness on gender and other related concepts and on VAWG in Lebanon. People who were chosen to be part of the experiment shared their feedback and stated how their participation has increased their knowledge around VAWG in Lebanon and encouraged them to better reflect on social constructs that define masculinity and femininity.

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.