While the first half of 2010 was dedicated for finalizing and signing the UNFPA-supported 2010-2014 Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) with the Council for Development and Reconstruction followed by articulation of joint projects with national partners, the second half of the year witnessed actual concretization of these projects at national level. As it has been the practice, all the projects were elaborated with the full participation and involvement of UNFPA's partners – both governmental and non-governmental – in line with the priority strategies defined in the 5 years CPAP and while ensuring that respective key interventions respond to the identified challenges and needs at sector levels and in targeted areas.

The implementation of the various projects and related activities benefitted from the leadership, commitment, and devotion of UNFPA's partners be it at the level of ministries, national commissions, NGOs, research and academic institutions/centers, United Nations agencies, media, and youth groups. More so, the technical assistance provided by national experts and resource persons certainly resulted in high quality outcomes and results.

Throughout its work, UNFPA continues to advance and promote the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (1994) as well as the Millennium Development Goals (2000) by emphasizing its three programme areas: Reproductive Health and Rights, Gender Equality, and Population and Development. Human rights and culture constitute fundamental cross-cutting parameters that are systematically addressed and reflected throughout all programme levels and stages.

In this newsletter issue covering July-December 2010, UNFPA Lebanon is pleased to highlight salient achievements and results. Your views and comments are appreciated and welcomed.
Supporting National Efforts for Ending Gender Based Violence

Since 2008, UNFPA has been leading the implementation of a project - supported by the Government of Italy – aiming at mainstreaming and institutionalizing Gender Based Violence (GBV) in national planning and development. Specifically this project was entrusted with contributing to the development of performance and quality standards and protocols; identifying needs and gaps in referral, resources, and research; strengthening coordination and knowledge sharing; supporting the establishment of a monitoring system; and contributing to national advocacy and lobbying initiatives and efforts for ending violence.

In responding to the above priorities, and by the end of 2010, the following were undertaken:

- Finalization of five studies that generated a wealth of practical and useful recommendations;
- Assessment of knowledge and perception about GBV among women, girls, and community leaders in Akkar, Tripoli and the Palestinian camps in the North;
- Initiation of a review of all GBV-related terms within the Lebanese context and development of a unified lexicon agreeable to all key actors;
- Support to the elaboration of a manual for working with women prisoners;
- Support to the elaboration of a reference manual on gender and women’s rights;
- Production of two issues of the GBV newsletter (TANSEEQ for ending GBV in Lebanon) and wide dissemination to over 2,500 recipients nationally, regionally, and globally;
- Support to the national White Ribbon Campaign within the context of the 16 Days Campaign to End Violence against Women and focusing on lobbying for the ratification of the draft law for protecting women from domestic violence.

The focus in 2011 will aim at translating key findings and recommendations into concrete activities and projects in partnership with national and regional entities.

Initiating a Collaboration with Ministry of Public Health

Following a series of consultations with the Minister and Director General of Public Health throughout 2010, UNFPA Lebanon signed a two-year project with the Ministry. The objective of this collaboration aims to support national efforts for fulfilling Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 5 pertaining to improving maternal health within a wider reproductive health perspective. The project which is co-financed by the Ministry falls within its endeavor in health sector reform by strengthening health performance and systems along border areas – mostly in underserviced regions- with emphasis on enhancing reproductive health quality of care and outreach components.

The key interventions that will be supported by UNFPA in 2011-2012 will focus primarily on enhancing outreach services on safe motherhood through hospitals in target areas, developing a Reproductive Health commodity security strategy with procurement of essential drugs and contraceptives, developing performance and normative tools and protocols in maternal health, expanding the RH package at primary care to include Gender Based Violence and Voluntary Counseling and Testing services, supporting the...
The maternal death observatory and notification system as well as relevant research. The maternal health programme, supported by both the Italian Cooperation and UNFPA is spearheaded by a high-level steering committee of technical experts chaired by the Ministry’s Director General which meets monthly to review progress and advise on the way forward.

Lebanon’s Contribution to Global Consultation on SRH and HIV Linkages

Lebanon was invited to participate in a global consultation meeting to discuss country implementation of the Rapid Assessment Tool for Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) and HIV linkages. The meeting was co-hosted during 1-3 December 2010 by IPPF, UNAIDS, UNFPA and WHO in collaboration with other key partners. The Lebanese delegation was represented by Ms Wafa Kanaan, (Primary Health Care coordinator at the Ministry of Public Health), Dr Nuhad Dumit (Principal Investigator of the survey at Rafic Hariri School of Nursing at the American University of Beirut) and Ms Nada Naja (Reproductive Health National Programme Officer with UNFPA Lebanon office and representing UNFPA Arab States Regional Office in the meeting). Lebanon was among the first round of 16 countries that implemented the tool at national level; additional 9 countries that are planning to roll it out in 2011 also participated in the meeting.

The consultation among participants focused on the rationale for SRH and HIV linkages, highlighting it as an approach to achieving Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 5 on improving maternal health and MDG 6 on combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

The meeting also provided an opportunity for country delegations to share their experiences in the implementation process as well as discuss key findings of their respective assessments at policy, systems and service delivery levels. The participants identified entry points and key interventions to operationalize the SRH and HIV linkages under each of the following five parameters:

- Coordination and accountability;
- Policy and legal barriers to service delivery;
- Capacity building of health care providers;
- Stigma and discrimination; and
- Donor conditionality.

By the end of the consultative meeting, the participants had a clear understanding on possible funding opportunities to operationalize the linkages.

As a last but fundamental step, the meeting discussed countries’ future plans. In this regard, it is worth noting that the Lebanon country action plan prepared by the delegation and presented to the participants was considered a good example of a comprehensive and systematic plan which is expected to be elaborated and operationalized in 2011.

SRH & HIV LINKAGES IN LEBANON: A CLOSE LOOK

Policy- Level
- No official policies were found related to SRH and HIV service linkages

System-Level Results Based on Supervisors Responses
- 98% of supervisors consider that there is a need for training on linkages between SRH and HIV

Service- Level Results Based on Providers Responses
- 47.5% of SRH providers reported no linkages of HIV services in their SRH services
- Only 13% of HIV service providers reported no linkages of SRH services in their HIV services
- 76.2% of HIV providers and 67.5% of SRH providers considered that linking both services will increase efficiency of the services

Service-Level Results Based on Clients Responses
- 67% of clients prefer receiving SRH and HIV services from same facility to decrease costs of transportation; comprehensive services; better follow up
- Perceived disadvantages from receiving SRH and HIV services from same facility: fear of HIV transmission; fear of other HIV patients; fear of stigma and discrimination

A Best Practice in the Making

Ever since the development of the Gender-Sensitive Life Skills Reproductive Health Education Curriculum was initiated in 2007, the Educational Center for Research and Development was keen to document the process that paved the way for the official endorsement of the said curriculum through the issuance of communiqué No 19/m/2009 on August 26, 2009.

The best practice documentation particularly emphasizes the advocacy efforts at several levels and stages on the one hand and the participatory approach on the other. It is worth noting that the elaboration of this pioneering work is based on international standards for curriculum based reproductive health education programs.

Such documentation could ultimately constitute a practical step by step reference if additional topics are to be addressed in school-based curricular and extra-curricular activities. The final document and corresponding poster will be published in 2011.

Y-PEERs Expanding Further… Reaching More

During the second half of 2010, the vibrant Y-PEER network of youth volunteers has been on an unstoppable ride. The national network welcomed 80 new peer educators thus becoming a network of 175 Y-PEER volunteers in its totality. The expansion reached the areas of Hasbayya, Shouf, Jounieh, and North Lebanon and was made possible through partnering with Lebanon Family Planning Association and Jeunesse Contre La Drogue. The network also welcomed Palestinian youth from 6 camps.

In September 2010, and in order to be equipped with adequate skills for voicing out their issues in a strategic way, Y-PEER members attended a two-day training on advocacy for being able to approach decision makers, media, sponsors and celebrities. The training was conducted by MASAR, a local association specialized in youth empowerment.

Upon completion of the theoretical training, Y-PEERs were put to the test. A meeting was set with the Minister of Public Health, Dr. Mohammad Jawad Khalifeh who welcomed the participants and listened attentively to their agenda on peer education. The minister was impressed by their knowledge and skills and promised to further develop the idea of integrating peer education in various health interventions particularly those related to Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS. In addition, Y-PEERs learned more from the experience of Sales Director of Café Najjar in Lebanon Mr Adel Jammal on how to approach sponsors as well as what would attract media from Al-Jadeed TV journalist Riad Kobeissi. Finally, celebrity actress Betty Tawtal joined the Y-PEERs at the workshop and interacted with them in acting out scenes on advocacy.
Y-PEERs in the Spotlight

An extensive media campaign accompanied the World AIDS Day event: feature stories in written press and magazines, Y-PEER hosts in talk shows on national TVs and radios... From December 1 to December 9, Y-PEERs became the number one non-governmental source for information on HIV/AIDS and youth in Lebanon and a total of 9 articles and 11 TV and radio talk shows reported on the event.

Empowered with newcomers and equipped with proper skills and tools, the Y-PEERs benefited from the global launching of the International Youth Year whereby they reiterated their commitment to delivering healthy messages to their peers. In that respect, the Y-PEERs organized high-visibility events such as the International Youth Day which they celebrated on air on August 12. Indeed, twice during that week, Y-PEER members participated in animating a one-hour live radio show on Mix FM’s very popular Comedy Revolution. Hosted by stand-up comedian and animator Nemr Abou Nassar, Y-PEERs made use of their fun and youthful spirit to tackle youth sexual-health taboos and to promote HIV/AIDS prevention information. In parallel, Y-PEER members conducted awareness activities on two beaches to promote the ABC (Abstinence, Be Faithful, Condomize) Prevention Strategy.

On December 8 and 9, for the occasion of World AIDS Day, Y-PEER members organized Our Health, Our Right... Let’s Take a Stand, a two-day event for raising awareness about HIV/AIDS prevention among high school students. The event was organized under the patronage of the Minister of Public Health, in partnership with the National AIDS Control Program and with the support of UNFPA Lebanon. More than 800 high school students, aged 15-18 years from 10 public and private schools throughout Lebanon took part in this event. On the agenda, three main activities: an educational games circuit, a theatre performance and a dance performance, all addressing HIV/AIDS related themes. Y-PEERs partnered with Tony Baroud, a popular Lebanese TV and sports celebrity, for animating the event by adding fun to the celebration and punctuating it with educational messages.

These encouraging results have motivated the Y-PEERs to plan further sessions and set outreach as one of their main priorities towards making youth’s causes more visible in 2011.

Edutainment at its Best

On World AIDS Day, member organizations in the Y-PEER network joined hands together to organize an educational NGO fair. The fair consisted of 9 games each addressing an HIV/AIDS related theme such as modes of transmission and prevention, Voluntary Counseling and Testing centers, stigma and discrimination, etc. The games ranged from life-size board games, a man-made maze, a wheel of knowledge and wall painting.
Introducing Theater Based Peer Education in Schools

In partnership with VAPA - Visual and Performing Arts (a local NGO), UNFPA introduced the theater based peer education (TBPE) approach to the Lebanese educational sector. The initiative co-lead by the Y-PEER network, focused on using theatrical techniques to raise students’ awareness on various topics such as gender based violence, smoking, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health.

TBPE refers to using theater for a purpose beyond entertaining an audience such as to improve people’s knowledge and trigger their curiosity on different topics which in turn are expected to influence their attitudes and perceptions.

It is with this objective that 68 students between 15 and 19 were selected to take part in this initiative from four schools: the Lebanese Evangelical School (Baabda), Zahrit Al Ihsan School (Ashrafieh), and Al Mabarrat Association represented by Imam Al Hassan (Southern Suburb) and Al Rahma School (Nabatie).

The implementation of the initiative was carried out between June and December 2010 and included three phases: the workshop, the rehearsals, and the theatrical performances. The workshop was intended to offer participants, i.e. students, the skills and guidance necessary to create short scenes on selected topics. As for the rehearsals they aimed at helping the students become more comfortable with their scenes and on stage. The last phase was that of the performances where the trained students got the chance to perform their scenes in front of their peers. A total of 11 shows were organized and 800 students were reached in the four participating schools. The performances also included a dialogue set between the audience and the actors on the topics addressed and which were facilitated by trained Y-PEER educators in TBPE.

Building on the success of this pilot initiative, a further elaborated and expanded project is being developed for 2011 targeting a wider audience and geographical coverage on the one hand and incorporating the TBPE technique within the education sector on the other.
Launching of Two Key Resources Related to Older People in Lebanon

Within the context of a joint collaboration between the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) and UNFPA (through the Population and Development project), two publications, National Report on Available Services for Older People in Lebanon and the Reference Guide for Residential and Outpatient Care Institutions for Older People in Lebanon, were completed and officially launched on October 20, 2010.

The two publications provide a description about the services offered to the elderly population in Lebanon in terms of availability, distribution, specialization and quality. In particular, the National Report on Available Services for Older People in Lebanon presents a set of key recommendations aiming to improve the living conditions of the elderly, among which:

- To study the actual cost per elderly in residential institutions in order to adjust the governmental contribution accordingly
- To improve the quality of care within institutions through the development of universal standards for care

The data and information presented by those documents to the academicians, researchers, decision makers, and experts in the field will not only enrich the knowledge base pertaining to older people in Lebanon, but will also support policy change and reform efforts in paving the way for the design of standards for optimum quality care provided by various types of institutions. Moreover, the information offered by the reference guide in particular, serves as an important tool for guiding older people and their families on the most appropriate and accessible services in response to their needs be it recreational, social, or health related.

The launching was held under the patronage of the Minister of Social Affairs, Dr. Selim El-Sayegh, and gathered a large attendance of more than 200 representatives of institutions that provide services to the elderly nationwide in addition to media professionals, government officials, and experts in the field of ageing.

The publications are a valuable tool for the institutions providing services to the elderly, MOSA’s Social Development Centers (SDCs) and activists in the field of ageing.

Future steps include ensuring a wide dissemination of the two publications throughout Lebanon to maximize their use by service providers, the elderly, and their families who constitute the direct beneficiaries.
On October 26, 2010, a workshop was organized by the Population and Development project, a joint collaboration between the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) and UNFPA. The importance of the workshop stems from the fact that it responded to one of the recommendations of the National Report on Services Available for Older People in Lebanon, which highlighted the urgent need to develop standards for the institutions that provide services for the elderly in Lebanon. The workshop is the first milestone in putting into effect concrete measures aiming to improve the living conditions of older people in Lebanon whether residing in institutions or at home.

The recommended standards of care, resulting from the workshop, were of utmost significance since they did not only reflect the international standards but also adapted to the specific local needs of these institutions and the cultural context of Lebanon.

The workshop held under the patronage of the Minister of Social Affairs, Dr. Selim El-Sayegh, consisted of a mixed audience of representatives from institutions that provide services to the elderly and experts in the field of ageing and who engaged in discussions based on field experience, best practices and lessons learned.

This workshop falls within the scope of MOSA’s plan to develop standards for institutions and NGOs affiliated with it in order to guarantee quality assurance and accreditation of contracted organizations. It is expected that the impact of this workshop and follow-up steps will be tangible on the elderly population in Lebanon and their families.

A full participatory approach was adopted especially as it was the product of the collaborative efforts between the Department of Family Affairs at MOSA, the Population and Development project, a joint collaboration between UNFPA and MOSA, and the National Permanent Committee for Elderly Affairs in Lebanon.

The proposed list of standards will be revised and finalized by a group of national experts before they are adopted by MOSA.
Needs Assessment of Girls and Women in North Lebanon

The Millennium Development Goals Fund (MDG-F) on Conflict Prevention and Peace-Building is a joint program currently being implemented in North Lebanon and supported by UNFPA, UNRWA, UNICEF, UNDP, ILO, and UNESCO.

This joint program aims at promoting participation and civic empowerment as well as strengthening civil society, in particular by involving youth and women, regardless of affiliation or religious confession, as agents of change.

Under the MDG-F joint program and in order to contribute to improving the situation of girls and women in selected communities of North Lebanon, UNFPA conducted a needs assessment among young girls and women complemented by an opinion survey among community leaders. The study was implemented in Akkar, Tripoli as well as the Palestinian camps of Nahr el Bared and Nahr el Beddaouli including surrounding villages.

What makes this study important is the fact that it is considered comprehensive in describing the socio-economic situation of women and girls in Akkar and Tripoli.

The objective of this study was to explore, understand, and identify the needs and priorities of women and young girls in various aspects such as health, education, employment, participation, and decision making. In addition, the study investigated the prevalence, types, and causes of gender-based violence in the targeted communities. As such, the assessment generated a set of essential findings that will be translated into concrete and realistic activities on the one hand, and will serve as baseline data and indicators on the other for determining progress and achievements in the areas covered by the project. On the other hand, the objective of the opinion survey was to assess the influence of local leaders and stakeholders in the North and analyze the challenges faced and opportunities needed to invest in women’s potentials as agents of change within their respective communities. This study was carried out between August and December 2010.

NEEDS AND PRIORITIES OF GIRLS AND WOMEN IN NORTH LEBANON

From the Perspective of Girls and Women
- 71% dropped out from schools
- 56% of working females entered the labor market to increase the family income
- 90% support women participation in social and political life
- Only 15% are involved in solving conflicts whereby 52% of them consider resolving conflicts as a man’s business
- 27% knew of a woman or a girl who is being exposed to violence
- 64% are against early marriage

From the Perspective of Married Women
- 65% don’t go to reproductive health checkups
- 51% had unplanned pregnancy

From the Perspective of Community Leaders
- Lack of comprehensive health services addressing women’s needs
- Lack of job opportunities for women
- Few respondents admit the presence of GBV while the majority deny or justify its occurrence
- Absence of GBV referral system
- Limited role of women in conflict resolution
- Absence of women participation in public activities
- Cultural and security barriers reflect negatively on women participation

The Importance of Gender Enhancement and Mainstreaming

The desire to make a difference at the policy level on women’s rights and empowerment has been an inspiring force for decades for activists, women machineries, and international organizations in Lebanon among others. Yet the absence of an updated national women strategy reflecting emerging needs and priorities substantiated the meager change in policies and laws pertaining to gender equality in most fields. That was the main drive behind venturing in the thorough review and updating of the national women strategy by the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW), an endeavor supported by UNFPA since 2008 and in which relevant stakeholders including civic society, governmental and public administrations as well as grassroots organizations were actively involved. A first draft has been completed in 2010, and will be discussed and validated at the national level in 2011 noting that NCLW is keen to guide the implementation of its priorities.

A previous cooperation between UNFPA and NCLW (i.e. Women Empowerment: Peaceful Action for Security and Stability – WEPASS) lead to the establishment of few NGOs and cooperatives in rural areas. Two of these NGOs were supported during the second half of 2010 through capacity development initiatives aiming at assisting them in management, execution and planning for sustainability. Indeed, the Women Empowerment Support Association in Kfeir (WESA) and the Women Solidarity NGO in Ras Baalback profited from these initiatives based on project ideas tailored according to identified needs in their respective communities. While WESA launched a cinema club and started raising awareness on gender discrimination, the Women Solidarity NGO initiated a health and sports club where health issues for women and girls are discussed and followed by physical training. These projects along with future ones will help both NGOs to play a vital role in creating a new dynamic on gender roles and rights.

L et s Partner

A school principal, attending one of the public movie discussions organized by WESA, suggested establishing partnership to start the activities at a school in the region of Hasbaya. “We can make use of this creativity to change discriminating mentalities among students and teachers”.

Never too Late!

As a reaction to the first health awareness session which was followed by physical training in the health & sports club established by the Women Solidarity NGO in Ras Baalback, a 50 years old women said “to start late in acquiring good healthy habits is better than never. I am now capable of leading a healthier life style in a place with so little opportunities”!
Lebanon’s Greenacting Showcased at UNFPA Global Meeting

Lebanon was identified as an early adapter of the UNFPA Climate Neutral Initiative, along with 9 other UNFPA offices worldwide. As such, Lebanon’s Greenacting newsletter was showcased as a green office good practice at UNFPA’s Global Meeting, held in November 2010 in New York.

Greenacting is UNFPA Lebanon’s own going green newsletter and it turned one year old on the February 1st, 2011. This internal and weekly electronic newsletter aims at sensitizing staff on climate neutrality by featuring country-specific information and updates on the one hand and providing practical and easy-to-implement alternative green behaviors on the other.

Public Exposure Pays Off

UNFPA participated in the 54th Beirut Arab International Book Fair, held December 3 – 16, 2010, at the BIEL exhibit center, downtown Beirut. Along with several United Nations agencies in Lebanon and under a “One UN” banner, UNFPA took part in this highly visible cultural event.

Numerous publications were distributed at the occasion including but not exclusive to UNFPA’s State of World Population reports, as well as a number of national studies. The series of studies assessing the Impact of the July 2006 War on Vulnerable Groups in Lebanon: Needs and Responsiveness were particularly successful among the audience. In two weeks time, more than 1500 reports were disseminated.

Once again, the fair offered UNFPA the opportunity to obtain the audience’s feedback. In comparison with last year’s opinion poll results, answers showed a substantive increase in visitors’ knowledge of UNFPA and interest in its mandate.

**Visitors Knowledge of and Interest in UNFPA Grows**

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2009

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2010
UNFPA on the Move
During the holiday season in December 2010 and as people were unpacking gifts, UNFPA staff members were unpacking boxes in their new offices! The move which was smoothly implemented was only a few blocks away, but it definitely brought UNFPA staff much closer to their UN colleagues.

UNFPA's New Address
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UNFPA – because everyone counts
UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, is an international development agency that promotes the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. UNFPA supports countries in using population data for policies and programmes to reduce poverty and to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV/AIDS, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect.

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