

# YOUNG VOICES

How working on Social Cohesion and Civil Society Empowerment with Youth can contribute to the Prevention of Violent Extremism

POLICY PAPER based on the lessons learned from the projects implemented by ARDD in Zarqa City, Jordan.



International Institute  
for Nonviolent Action

OPEV  
observatory to prevent  
extremist violence





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# **YOUNG VOICES**

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Empowerment with Youth can contribute to the  
Prevention of Violent Extremism

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ARDD	Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development
BBtU	Building Bridges to Understanding Project
FoOJ	The Future of Our Journalism Project
JRP	Jordan Response Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NOVACT	International Institute for Non-Violent Action
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPEV	Observatory for the Prevention of Violent Extremism
PVE	Prevention of Violent Extremism
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

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# RATIONALE

As the Syrian crisis enters its seventh year, countries neighbouring Syria - Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey- have become the epicentre of one of the most dramatic refugee crisis in modern history, as they **have taken in around 5 million Syrians, over 90% of the fleeing population.**<sup>1</sup>



According to governmental sources, Jordan is hosting some 1.266 million Syrians, of which 655,833 are officially registered as refugees.

That means that **Jordan has the second-greatest ratio of refugees to citizens of any country in the world** [only after Lebanon]. It lets the country in a very complex and fragile situation, given the fact that “as the stream of refugees continue, so does the pressure to adequately cater to needs, absorb potential, and mediate integration between the local and incoming populations.”<sup>2</sup>

## SOME KEY FIGURES

**1 in 11** - Proportion of Jordan’s population who are refugees registered with UNHCR

**5** - Jordan is the fifth largest refugee hosting country in the world

**4 out of 5** - Proportion of Syrians living outside of camps and below the poverty line in Jordan

**80,000** - Syrians living in Jordan’s Zaatari refugee camp

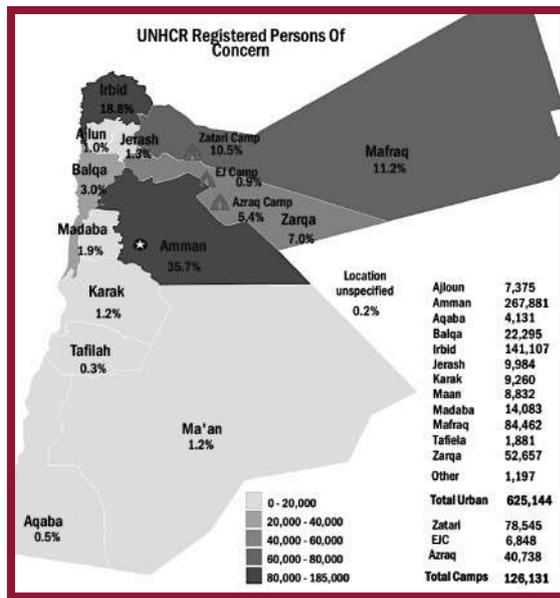
**78** - Percentage of Syrians registered with UNHCR in refugee camps who are women and children

**90** - Percentage of the Syrian registered refugee population who have been living in Jordan for three or more years

SOURCE: ReliefWeb. (2018). Jordan: UNHCR Operational Update, July 2017. [online] Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/jordan-unhcr-operational-update-july-2017>.

<sup>1</sup> “Syria Country Profile: About the Crisis”. UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian affairs. <http://www.unocha.org/syrian-arab-republic/syria-country-profile/about-crisis>

<sup>2</sup> “Neighbouring Host-Countries’ Policies for Syrian Refugees: the Cases of Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.” European Institute of the Mediterranean. [Papers IEMed, January 2017]



Within Jordan, **the large influx of refugees to Zarqa governorate, particularly to Zarqa city, has added significant pressure to already-stressed local resources.** Even before the surge of refugees, Zarqa was marred by economic decline, rising costs of living, and a poverty rate that has - unlike the rest of Jordan - increased in recent years. According to UNHCR, there are at least 100,000 Syrians in the entire governorate, roughly 40,000 of which live in Zarqa city. As a result, tensions between Jordanians and refugees - particularly among youth - continue to worsen.

In response to the structural challenges that youth in Zarqa face, Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development [ARDD] has implemented two different projects in the city, namely **Building Bridges to Understanding** in Zarqa: Engaging Young People in Promoting Social Cohesion [BBtU] [from January 2017 to July 2017, carried out in collaboration with the International Institute for Non-Violent Action], and **The Future of Our Journalism [FoOJ] -Mustaqbal Sahafutna-** [from January 2015 to October 2016 ].

The first project aimed at empowering youth to be meaningful agents of social cohesion between the refugee and host communities in Zarqa through the provision of psychosocial support, trainings on conflict management, and opportunities to engage with community leaders. The second one aimed at enabling youth to identify political and socioeconomic issues of concern to them and their communities, and empowering them to take positive action in addressing those issues through the model of citizen journalism. [More information about the projects can be found in the Annex, p. 33]

**Although the projects primary focused on civil society empowerment and social cohesion, their impacts span into other areas, including peace building and conflict resolution, as well as Prevention of Violent Extremism [PVE].**

Indeed, a number of the underlying conditions that drive frustration for the inability to have an agency in society, as well as those that lead to tensions between Jordanians and refugees, can be the same conditions that act as “push factors” for individuals who ultimately join violent extremist groups.

**Therefore, this research aims to bring together the lessons learned from the implementation of both projects, drawing connections between civil society empowerment and social cohesion, as two main pillars of any PVE policy that wants to be inclusive and participative to, and therefore owned by, the community that aims to serve.**

In other words, this paper exposes the importance and impact of investing in youth as a key agent of positive social change and PVE, by exploring how civil society empowerment and social cohesion components can maximise the potential of PVE projects.

# DRAWING CONNECTIONS

## SOCIAL COHESION, EMPOWERMENT AND PREVENTION

Social cohesion and civil society empowerment are close and intertwined elements of social quality. Social cohesion entails two different dimensions, the horizontal and the vertical. The horizontal dimension consists of sustained levels of interpersonal interaction; the level of trust between community members; senses of belonging and motivation; and tendencies for collective action against outgroups.<sup>3</sup> The vertical one has to do with citizen perceptions of state and local authorities and citizen tendencies towards collective action against state authorities, or lack thereof. From a vertical cohesion perspective, **civil society empowerment becomes an essential ingredient of any initiative aimed at building more cohesive societies.**



Street Art in Amman

**International development agencies working in Jordan tend to oversee the importance of the vertical dimension of social cohesion.** For instance, UNDP Jordan has prioritised social cohesion in programming since 2008, but it reduces the concept to the horizontal component, as social cohesion is defined as “the reduction of disparities, inequalities, and social exclusion... [and] the strengthening of social relations, interactions and ties.”<sup>4</sup>

**A more comprehensive understanding of social cohesion, including the relevance of empowering civil society actors, allows to drive connections to peace-building and PVE.**

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<sup>3</sup> Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, *Community Security and Social Cohesion: Towards a UNDP Approach*, December 2009, 14. Accessed at: [http://www.cmimarseille.org/sites/default/files/newsite/library/files/en/GhimAR\\_Social%20Cohesion%20Report.pdf](http://www.cmimarseille.org/sites/default/files/newsite/library/files/en/GhimAR_Social%20Cohesion%20Report.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> *Idem.*

The scholar M. S. Jeannotte [2000] made a valuable contribution by analysing the approach to social cohesion of three Europe-related institutions, the European Union, the OECD and the Council of Europe. From her analysis she proffered the characteristics of a cohesive society, which can be also bring light to the Jordanian case.

The author distinguishes four types of characteristics of a cohesive society:<sup>5</sup>

- **Political:** Freedom of expression, free flow of information, protection of human rights, application of the rule of law, political link between citizen and the state, active participation in society.
- **Economic:** Stable and secure society, secure access to material well-being, regulation to correct market failure.
- **Social:** Universal systems of social protection, access to housing, health care and education, freedom from crime and corruption, social links to the community, systems of social dialogue.
- **Cultural:** Positive attitude to cultural diversity.

Jeannotte's cohesive society has many points in common with what is understood as a resilient society to violent extremism by the Observatory for the Prevention of Violent Extremism [OPEV]. In January 2017, more than 320 representatives of 172 civil society organisations and social movements from 22 countries of the Euro-Mediterranean Region, met in Barcelona to discuss the prevention of violent extremism. The Barcelona Conference: "Towards a new paradigm: Preventing Violent Extremism", resulted in the adoption of the Barcelona Declaration, which provides interesting insights on the conditions and the structural context conducive to violent extremism. The main recurrent drivers, which are common among a wide variety of countries of the Euro-Mediterranean Region and which can lead, sometimes in isolation and sometimes in combination with other factors, to violent radicalisation and violent extremism are lack of socioeconomic

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<sup>5</sup> Jeannotte, M.S. 2000. *Social cohesion around the world: an international comparison on definitions and issues*. [Department of Canadian Heritage, Hull, Quebec, Canada]. Accessed at: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.618.972&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

opportunities; Marginalization and discrimination; Political terror, violations of human rights and the rule of law; Prolonged and unresolved conflicts and lack of resolution and non-transformation of structural conflicts; And indoctrination in prisons.

There is a clear relation between these drivers and Jeannoté's characteristics of a cohesive society. **The empowerment of civil society can make a contribution to political, economic and social factors of social cohesion, as civil society actors push and advance in their social demands.** Social cohesion, in its horizontal dimension, serves to the fourth cultural factor, contributing to a positive attitude to cultural diversity. As a whole, together, **civil society empowerment and social cohesion contribute to tackle the multiplicity of drivers conducive to violent extremism in all of its forms and can play a part in its prevention.**

# YOUTH

The 2015 Security Council [Resolution 2250](#) on Youth, Peace and Security<sup>6</sup> marked the formal recognition of the potential role of young women and men as positive agents for the maintenance of international peace and security.

In the Jordanian context, the role of youth in social cohesion and conflict prevention has been recognised by UNHCR Jordan and the cluster of NGOs working on protection issues as an essential element for Building Refugee Community Capacity,<sup>7</sup>

the Jordan Response Plan<sup>8</sup>, as well as the Regional Refugee Response Plan for the Syrian Crisis, in which youth engagement is framed within the UNICEF-coordinated No Lost Generation initiative.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, in the recent decades, the involvement of some young people, young men in particular, but also increasingly young women, in violence and extremist groups has led some to paint youth generally as a threat to global security and stability. This vision, however, is based on a minority sample as, according to the UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development Report on Young People's Participation in Peace-building, the majority of youth – despite the injustices, deprivations and abuse they can confront daily, particularly in conflict contexts – are not violent and do not participate in violence.<sup>10</sup>

Going even further **“youth should be conceptualised and studied as agents of positive peace in terms of addressing not only the challenges of physical violence, but also the challenges of**



Street Art in Amman

<sup>6</sup> Available at: [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2250\(2015\)&referer=/english/&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2250(2015)&referer=/english/&Lang=E)

<sup>7</sup> UNHCR Protection Cluster, UNHCR Headquarters in Amman [12 September 2017].

<sup>8</sup> Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis 2017-2019 [p. 53] Accessed at: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/522c2552e4b0d3c39ccd1e00/t/5956897e78d1714f5b61f5c2/1498843547605/JRP+2017-2019+-+Full+-+%28June+30%29.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> 3RP, Regional, Refugee & Resilience Plan 2017-2018 [p.20] Accessed at <http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/3RP-Regional-Strategic-Overview-2017-2018.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, *Practice Note on Youth & PeaceBuilding* [p.6] Accessed at: <http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/pdf/Practice%20Note%20Youth%20&%20Peacebuilding%20-%20January%202016.pdf>

**structural and cultural violence**, and the broader social change processes to transform violent, oppressive and hierarchical structures, as well as behaviour, relationships and attitudes into more participatory and inclusive ones.”<sup>11</sup>

As it was concluded in the Field Research on the Role of Youth in Kurdistan Region of Iraq and Social Cohesion carried out by NOVACT, youth is a central actor in social dynamics in conflict-affected societies and they mirror social relations dynamics at play in their societies. **Young people can be effectively mobilised in support of the formation of social capital and the strengthening of social cohesion in the context of divided societies.**<sup>12</sup>

The participant youth of Building Bridges to Understanding (BBtU) and The Future of Our Journalism (FoOJ), whose viewpoints have been collected in the next section of this research, are aware of their potential role as positive agents of change in their societies and they are willing to play it.

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<sup>11</sup> Ozerdem, A. [2017]. *The Role of Youth in Peacebuilding: Challenges and Opportunities*. [online] Sustainable Security. Accessed at: <https://sustainablesecurity.org/2016/10/26/the-role-of-youth-in-peacebuilding-challenges-and-opportunities/> [Accessed 16 Nov. 2017].

<sup>12</sup> Carames, A. [2017] “Field research on the role of youth in Kurdistan region of Iraq social cohesion”, Fursa Consortium research report, NOVACT [to be published].

# FOCUS GROUPS FINDINGS ANALYSIS

## A VOICE FOR ACTION

From the participant's experiences, **the projects' training sessions proved to provide key tools to empower youth as agents of social change. Since the projects ended, they have found their acquired skills useful to communicate the needs and social issues they identified in their communities. The identification of social issues to be addressed in Zarqa led youth to develop interests that resulted in specific initiatives:**

One of the female participants decided to run as a candidate in local elections. "The project of FoOJ gave me motivation to participate in elections." "I realised I had the courage to be in charge, and talk in front of people."

She did not win. According to another participant [male], the reason behind was that "here in Zarqa we have a social problem, people here does not trust young people." The candidate participant made the following metaphor: "We are in a stadium and we all know as Jordanians who are the ones who will always control the ball. We all know who will be the people in charge, they are always the same".

The participant was asked if by this metaphor she meant that it is not possible to make a change through political participation. "I believe in myself, I can make any change but the problem is that I may not be able to persuade some people to make a vote for me".



Street Art in Amman

According to her, the fact of **being a women was not an obstacle for participating and winning elections**, “because there are a lot of women here in Jordan running for elections”.

A male participant decided to create a blog: “After the project finished I created a blog to talk about the problems in Zarqa and I was trying to make my blog seen by most of the people. “Unfortunately, after three days, my blog was closed”. Why? “I don’t know why. It disappeared”. After the project this participant regarded sharing and communicating as something essential to bring about change in his surrounding social environment.

Another male participant emphasised that the project FoOJ had given him the tools for writing good and talking about social problems in Zarqa. “In my account in Facebook, when I post contents making use of these tools, I am able to make better advocacy.”

In the same line, a female participant stated that “FoOJ helped us improve our writings about the problems. And we tried to redirect those issues to the people who cares about them.”

Another female participant [Jordanian, FoOJ] claimed “The project made me able to, but the society made empty promises and gave no results.”

According to a BBtU participant, the fact of participating in the project in itself can have a positive impact on other youth, as “at very least, I think that it may change a little bit people’s minds when we post in Facebook our experience here with ARDD. They may see what we do and what is it like, and that may make them learn and have the motivation to come, participate and learn. Sharing our experiences may improve the society and the community.”

## A VOICE FOR PEACE

**Participants' experiences prove that the projects contributed to build youth's capacity to address conflict in a non-violent manner. They felt their active listening and communication skills are useful to address tensions in a constructively and they used their skills at home, school and other community spaces. In specific, they found their skills useful to act as mediators in situations of tensions among refugee and host community.**



Street Art in Amman

In words of a Syrian male participant: "Through the project BBtU we talked a lot about social cohesion between Syrians and Jordanians. In my personal experience, I learned a lot on how to understand Jordanians and how Jordanians think about Syrians. That helped me to have Jordanian friends as well as to be more active and integrated within society. And I think it helped Jordanians as well to learn about Syrians and to realise that we are people just like them. We are all the same".

"I think that it will have a tremendous influence in society because each of us is part of the society, each of us has a family and friends with whom to share our experience. So for instance, if a Jordanian goes and tells his friends and family, I had an experience with Syrian people and they were nice, that may change their point of view about Syrians, and the other way around as well."

A Syrian female participant put it this way: "Throughout the project, there was a session in which we were told to try to put us on each other's shoes. To put us as Syrians in Jordanian shoes and as Jordanians in Syrian shoes. So they were able to better understand what is it like to be Syrian, and the same for us, we were able to understand what is it like to be Jordanian".

This exercise of understanding was regarded by all BBtU participants as a personal turning point. Interestingly, **they placed this personal transformation, as well as its spill-over effects on their**

**surroundings (family and friends), at the core of the role that they as youth can play against violent extremisms of any kind.**

A Jordanian male explained, "I myself changed. Before the project I hated Syrians. For no reasons. I had a bad experience with one Syrian and I used to generalise. But after the project I learned not to generalise and not to judge everyone by one mistake. Now I have a lot of strong friendships with Syrians, which I built throughout the project".

On the other side, a Syrian male explains "I used to have the idea that all Jordanians are racist and they just hate us as Syrians. So I used to dislike Jordanians. That was based on the experience I had when I first arrived to Jordan. I had bad experiences in school as some teachers were racist with me so that made me think that all Jordanians were racist."

For FoOJ participants, **in spite of the fact that the project did not have any specific component of training in non-violence, it also provided them with tools that they consider useful for peace-building.**

According to a female participant, "it is enough to learn to accept the other." The project had a component of social cohesion, which is an essential element in fostering peaceful coexistence in any society. As happened in BBtU, **the fact of participating in the project with people from other communities had an effect in changing the perception they had on these communities and built mutual understanding.**

A male participant claimed: "The Voice. The most important tool this project gave us is the Voice. That we can talk to anyone whoever they are." A female summarised it as "Communicative skills."

A male participant added, "FoOJ gave us the tool to be unbiased. Not to be on anyone's side. If you want to be a journalist and talk about social problems you need to be impartial." "Not white, not black, be grey!" a Jordanian male pointed out.

The participants were then asked if they considered this impartiality to be important when they talk as youth about issues regarding the prevention of violent extremism. **Participants regarded values**

**on which they worked during the project as important in the promotion of non-violent resolution of conflicts, tensions and grievances.**

As a female participant of FoOJ stated: “Of course as we are journalists, we have to be unbiased”. And a male added: “As a journalist you must have the values of truth, humanity and freedom.”

**All participants from both projects identified as a priority to share with their close environment those key values they had learned during the project. Some of them went even beyond, calling it a responsibility.**

“I think all of the youth have responsibility and all of them are able to make a change through communication. I can talk to my friends and spread the word.” [Female, Jordanian, FoOJ]

“I can also spread the knowledge that I got from here [the project] to my friends, to all people around me.” [Male, Jordanian, FoOJ]

A female [FoOJ] proposed also being an example as a mean to build peace and coexistence: “I can help them when they are in some kind of situation or problem. When they see they have help from random people, they will see they also have responsibility to help other people even if they do not know them”.

All the participants affirmed to had been able to influence people in their surroundings, family and friends.

“Since I changed, I was able to change a lot of my friends.” [Male, Jordanian BBtU].

“I was able to change my family minds” [Female, Syrian, BBtU]

“I changed myself, my friends, and my family.” [Female, Jordanian, FoOJ]

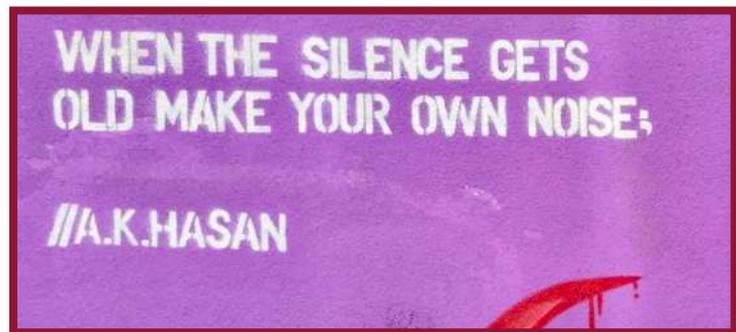
Some of them went one step further, carrying out raising awareness sessions among other youth.

“I am volunteering now to raise awareness in schools, organising debates and dialogue on how they can have an impact on society”. [Male, Jordanian, FoOJ].

“I think I can also influence young girls by inspiring them and showing them how important it is to be peaceful and how important it is to understand others, how important is peace for our society and all what we can achieve if we have peace in our countries”. This participant [Female, Jordanian, FoOJ] has been carrying out awareness sessions for teenagers in schools in Zarqa.

## A VOICE TO BE HEARD

The last phase of the focus group provided evidence on **the importance of including a vertical social cohesion component in projects, to make youth feel heard and consolidate their empowerment in their communities as civil society actors. Once youth has been empowered, they identify as a major obstacle adults and the elderly’s unwillingness to make space for youth in their communities’ decision-making.**



Street Art in Amman

In a male participant [Jordanian, BBtU] words, “Old school never gives any chance to the new one. Adults with an old mind cannot accept our point of view as youth.” Why? “They have an idea and they close it [like in a box]. It is not just that you cannot change it, you cannot even open it.”

“Adults are not willing to allow youth to take on leadership roles, because sometimes they think that as youth we are gonna give up on our traditions, just be Western and loose our culture. Adults have a tremendous misunderstanding about being open-minded and being empathetic because

they sometimes believe it is a Western culture weakening our culture and that we might lose our culture and our traditions. They are absolutely against it, and I am against it too. But I am also with being open-minded and understanding". [Male, Syrian, BBtU]

Participants were asked what could be done to prove adults that they should be more inclusive to youth. **Most participants emphasised the need to be an example of the change they want to see, to prove they deserve the trust of their families and communities to embrace responsibilities and decision-making power.**

"I think we can try to change their mind. My parents did not trust me. My parents did not believe I had the ability to make any change, about my life, my studies. I did it and now my parents trust me." [Male, Jordanian, FoOJ]

"Update them". [Male, Jordanian, BBtU]

"If we show them that we have skills that they need and that they don't have, then they will have to accept us as youth because they will feel that they need us. They need our ideas." [Male, Syrian, BBtU]

"You must be able to sell yourself to your family." [Male, Jordanian, FoOJ]

A female participant [Jordanian, BBtU] claimed that youth has to be able to reach society and solve problems. She pointed at the participant who ruled for elections as the best example. "She should talk about her political experience as she was about to be a decision-maker and she was the youngest candidate".

[Female, Jordanian, FoOJ] "At the very beginning I did not take it very seriously. My dad asked me to participate in the elections. I was 25. So, I went there and I saw that all people started to communicate with me. Then I felt that I put myself into a serious position because I would have a word, and an influence into a lot of things if I won. And I was a woman and I was the youngest candidate. Being a girl was not a problem. The biggest problem was that people did not believe in the role of youth."

A male participant pointed out that politics is very important to make changes. The participant who ran for elections clarified: "I refused to be a member of any party. But I had a lot of offers to be a member of many parties, some of them already existed, some of them were being created."

Participants were asked if they felt **political parties represented them as youth** and if there was the possibility for youth to organise themselves and create new political parties. The candidate girl answered **negatively** to the first question: "That is the reason why I refused to be member of any party."

**Participants agreed on the possibility of creating new political parties but they noted the difficulties they face to do that.** "We need 150 people to make a political party." [Female, Jordanian, FoOJ]

"The hardship is to find such loyal youth people who really want to work hard for society and for youth. There is many people that maybe only want to gain political running. That is the difficulty I am facing." [Female, Jordanian, FoOJ]

**Participants agreed on the fact that to overcome these difficulties it would be necessary to first put in place projects to make youth aware and empowered so they can be more committed.**

# INTERVIEWING THE TRAINERS: SOME INSIGHTS

[Find below some key and illustrative insights of the interviews. The complete interviews can be found in the Annex Section of the report].

## **MOUSA ABU QAOOD**, Conflict Management and Dialogue trainer

“For refugees, to be displaced from their country is a first form of violence that they face and that they have been subjected to. But also being refugee in a host country exposes them to a certain types of violence, such as the non-acceptance of the host community to their presence, because for the host community they are seen merely as refugees who are competing with them for the resources. The best approach to address this is to work interchangeably between the two communities to make them more sensitized to the issues that each of them are facing, equally Syrians and Jordanians.”

“Moreover, there were issues with violence that is practiced against participants by their parents or by their family. We can talk of domestic violence or pressure that impacts youth negatively.

Further, there are the socially received patterns of violence that affect both parties. Jordanians on one hand are being fed of the idea that refugees are aliens to the country and that they are here to steal the resources and opportunities, while Syrians are being fed of the idea that Jordanians are exploiting refugees’ vulnerabilities for their own gain. These misperceptions overlap in both communities and put one against the other.”

“One negative aspect of how PVE is being currently addressed is that it is tackled as merely a product of the religion of Islam. Projecting Islam as the main source of violence may lead to more trouble than solutions in the long-run. We should address violence and extremism from multiple perspectives and not limited to the religion of Islam, which only leads us to islamophobia.”

“For future programming, if we are talking about preventing Violent Extremism, it is necessary that we address issues of dialogue and communication on the one hand but also freedom of expression and freedom of believe. They are very tight to PVE because society is growing more diverse and we should provide the tools to accept this diversity rather than to reject it or to act against it.”

## **RAMI QUWAIDER**, Legal Awareness trainer

“Legal empowerment is key to any effort that seeks to build peace because if people are more aware of their rights and the means to assert them they will know which venues to seek to make their rights respected. That will absolutely reduce tension or the need to resort to violence to assert their rights.”

“Investing in youth will lead to many things. First of all, the right investment and the proper interventions that are done specifically in the framework of Preventing Violent Extremism will lead to reducing the amount of violence that people might have in between them. Enhancing communication and dialogue skills will positively impact the development efforts that are being done in Jordan, because having a solid culture of dialogue and rejection of violence as a common notion that everyone is embracing will certainly lead to improvements in development terms. It will also be reflected in social terms and it is, overall, progress. It is very important also because the largest percentage of people in Jordan is youth, that is why Jordan is called a youth society.”

# CONCLUDING REMARKS

Violent Extremism is a symptom of social stresses, a complex combination of factors for which there is no specific receipt. We need to take a step back and go to those factors creating a feeling of stress and pressure in the social fabric, to which youth are specially sensitive, as they do not feel allowed to take part on the forces that shape their social life. More urgent than the need for projects to counter violent extremism, is the need of projects to affect the structural causes that may be conducive to it.

**It is worthy to invest in social cohesion and civil society empowerment from a youth-centred approach, participant youth care about it and, as it will be exposed in the following sections, it has a positive spill-over effect that makes a relevant contribution to PVE efforts.**

## CIVIL SOCIETY EMPOWERMENT

**Empowering youth to change their social reality**, or at least to pulse for it through social activism, and training them on non-violent communication and action, **means opening an outlet for the tensions existing in any society, both within and between communities.** Youth in Zarqa faces important challenges, according to them, specially in terms of opportunities to study and work, and they feel specially constrained by home and family environments. In other words, they strive for opportunities to make a living and achieve personal fulfillment.

The ability to work to change those things youth perceive as unfair in their environment, including those challenges they personally face in their everyday life, and specially the ability to communicate them, has two-folded positive effect. On the one hand, **it has proven relevant to their personal growth and self-confidence.** On the other hand, **it provides society with a valuable self-reflection mechanism and drive for social transformation.** It is important that channels are opened for these youth to participate and play the role they want to play in their communities.

In the long-term, **empowering youth and encouraging their activism is a key ingredient for an empowered civil society able to have a real social agency.** A civil society able to foster channels of influence and participation into governance structures is **the only guarantee of policies owned by those affected by them**, what is of particular importance in efficiency terms in relation to sensitive communitarian issues such as the PVE.

Finally, in order for civil society to foster an environment where informed and active social actors can induce change, **it is of utmost importance that they are provided the freedom to operate**, as well as have an open and cooperative relationship with government actors.

## SOCIAL COHESION

Participants emphasised how the project contributed to **building understanding among the Syrian Refugee and the Host Jordanian Community**, allowing them to put themselves in each other's shoes. The project fostered the creation of inter-communitarian friendships, and **participants regarded this personal transformation**, as well as its spill-over effects on their surroundings [family and friends], **at the core of the role that they as youth can play against violent extremism of any kind.**

Even if a project is not specifically targeted on social cohesion, such as in the case of The Future of Journalism, the fact of **participating in the project with people from other communities has an effect in changing misconceptions that one community may have on another** and in building mutual understanding. Participants regarded values on which they worked during the projects as important in terms of promotion of non-violent resolution of conflicts, tensions and grievances. In short, mainstreaming social cohesion in projects' programming, by ensuring intra-group diversity, can expand projects' positive externalities in social terms, as perceptions of otherness become nuanced and dialogue happens.

**In conclusion, social cohesion and civil society empowerment should be a strategic axis for the various mandates currently operating through emergency humanitarian affairs, peace-building and development, and in particular in PVE.**

# KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

## FOR PREVENTION OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM EFFORTS

- More urgent than the need for projects to prevent violent extremism, is the need of projects to affect the structural causes that may be conducive to it.
- As Violent Extremism is a symptom of social stresses, we need to address those factors creating a feeling of stress and pressure in the social fabric, to which youth are specially sensitive, as they do not feel allowed to take part on the forces that shape their social life.
- Investing in social cohesion and civil society empowerment from a youth-centred approach has positive spill-over effects that make a relevant contribution to PVE efforts.
- A civil society able to [and allowed to] influence and contribute to national strategy of PVE is key to ensure PVE plans efficiency as it is the only guarantee of putting in place policies owned by those affected by them.
- Participants regard their personal transformation during the projects, as well as their spill-over effects on their surroundings [family and friends], at the core of the role that they as youth can play against violent extremisms of any kind.

## FOR A COHESIVE SOCIETY

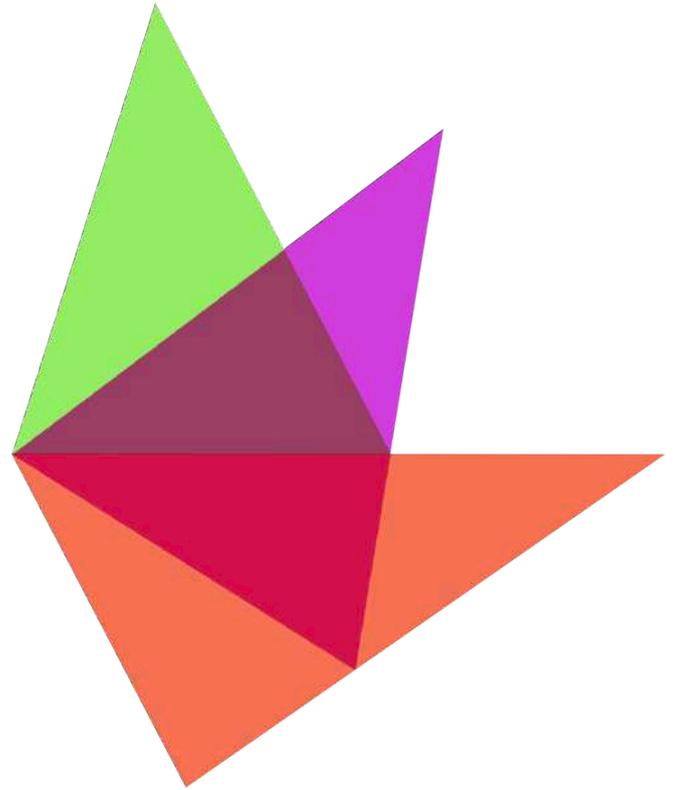
- Empowering youth to pulse for social change through social activism, and training them on non-violent communication and action, means opening an outlet for the tensions existing in any society, both within and between communities.

- Participant youth feel strong constraints in the family environment for their personal fulfilment, and attribute the prejudices they had on the other communities ahead the project to their community environment.
- Awareness on freedom of believe and freedom of expression rights should be regarded as essential elements of projects aimed at peace-building and youth empowerment.
- Youth-focused social cohesion projects in the Jordanian context make a great contribution to peace-building efforts.
- Mainstreaming social cohesion in projects' programming, by ensuring intra-group diversity, can expand projects' positive externalities in social terms, changing misperceptions that one community can have on another and building mutual understanding.

## FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

- Empowering youth to communicate about the things they perceive as unfair has contributed to participants personal growth and self-confidence.
- It is important that channels are opened for youth to participate and play the role they want to play in their communities.
- An empowered youth provides society with a valuable drive for social transformation. It is essential for an overall active civil society.
- Projects that aim to empower an active and critic civil society in Jordan have to acknowledge that empowered civil society actors may face some difficulties in being given the space and support they need in order to facilitate the development of an informed and active society. It is of key importance that civil society actors are provided with freedom to operate, as well as have an open and cooperative relationship with government actors.

# **ANNEX**



- **Research lines**
- **Methodology**
- **The Projects**
- **Interviewing the Trainers**

# RESEARCH LINES

1. Exploring both projects' training sessions as tools to empower youth as agents of social change.
2. Exploring Conflict Management Skills and Non-Violence Communication Training as a tool to build resilience against violence.
3. Exploring the social cohesion component of projects as a tool to challenge mis-representative conceptions of otherness and raising sensitivity for diversity and minorities rights issues.
4. Exploring the importance of including a vertical social cohesion component in youth-focused projects, to make youth feel heard and consolidate their empowerment as civil society actors.
5. Exploring youth's vision on their potential role in PVE.
6. Obtaining lessons for future programming from project participants' feedback.
7. Opening new lines for further research.

# METHODOLOGY

## Contextual Analysis

A desk review was carried out both to build knowledge on the context and background in which the projects are taking place as well as to work on a solid theoretical basis in conceptual terms when dealing with social cohesion, civil society empowerment, PVE and role of youth in peace-building.

## Getting to know key partners in Jordan

This research has been carried out in continuous contact with other actors working on PVE in Jordan, in order to follow the developments in the field from a broader perspective, both at national and local level.

The role of youth in social cohesion and conflict prevention has been recognised by UNHCR Jordan and the cluster of NGOs working on protection issues as an essential element for Building Refugee Community Capacity,<sup>13</sup> becoming part of the Jordan Response Plan<sup>14</sup>, as well as the Regional Refugee Response Plan for the Syrian Crisis, in which youth engagement is framed within the UNICEF-coordinated No Lost Generation initiative.<sup>15</sup>

A meeting held with UNDP Counter Violent Extremism Officer, Mr. Mohammed Nour Khrais, provided a glance on UNDP efforts to make sure that Jordanian civil society is included in PVE efforts at national level, not only in implementation, but also in design and decision-making.

Attendance to Action-Aid Round Table on Youth Perspectives on Violent Extremism, where their research on how lack of cohesion can be a core motive for the vulnerability of youth to extremism was presented, provided interesting insights.

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<sup>13</sup> UNHCR Protection Cluster, UNHCR Headquarters in Amman [12 September 2017].

<sup>14</sup> Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis 2017-2019 [p. 53] Accessed at: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/522c2552e4b0d3c39ccd1e00/t/5956897e78d1714f5b61f5c2/1498843547605/JRP+2017-2019+-+Full+-+%28June+30%29.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> 3RP, Regional, Refugee & Resilience Plan 2017-2018 [p.20] Accessed at <http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/3RP-Regional-Strategic-Overview-2017-2018.pdf>

## **Developing focus group discussion guide**

The focus group discussion guide was developed on the basis of four main topics, namely: civil society empowerment, peace-building, PVE and recommendations for future projects.

The section on civil society empowerment wanted to start with a warm up question on the social problems youth identified in Zarqa, and from this point it explored the existence of participants initiatives to deal with those problems, participants perception on their access to decision-making spaces, and the projects' contribution on both.

The section on peace-building went through how the projects strengthened participants peace-building capacities and their impact in society. This section specially focused on the role of youth as mediators between Syrian Refugee and Jordanian Host Communities.

The section on Prevention of Violent Extremism aimed to explore if skills acquired throughout the projects were regarded by participants as useful tools in PVE terms. It also went through participants' perception on their role in PVE in their communities, and the obstacles they face to take on leadership roles.

The last section let space to participants to propose changes and improvements for future projects' executions.

## **Recruit focus group participants, and facilitate focus groups**

The Focus Group participants where recruited by ARDD personnel among the participants of Building Bridges to Understanding and The Future of Our Journalism projects. The recruiters were tasked with trying to obtain parity among participants regarding gender and project's participation. Finally, the focus group counted with 4 males and 3 females; 3 participants of Building Bridges to Understanding, 3 from The Future of Our Journalism and 1 from both. Out of the participants from The Future of Our Journalism, half [one male, one female] are Syrian. Participant's ages ranged between 19 and 26.

Focus Group was carried out in ARDD's centre in Zarqa and it lasted for one hour and a half. Focus Group facilitation was carried out by the author with the active collaboration of focus group participants, as two of them [one male, one female] performed as translators and moderators.

## **Analysing the findings**

As the questions presented solicited qualitative responses, which varied from participant to participant, they are presented substantively rather than quantified, so as not to lose the subtle differences between participants' points of view. However where there is common points among responses, these are highlighted as key findings.

The structure set out in the stage of focus group discussion guide design proved to be unsuitable for the analysis of the findings. The section on prevention of violent extremism got mixed and diluted into other topics, becoming a transversal topic deeply embedded in participant's perspectives on the importance of social cohesion and communication skills.

## **Interviewing trainers**

The research has been complemented with the interviews to two of the participant's trainers, namely Mousa Abu Qaood, the Conflict Management and Dialogue trainer for Building Bridges to Understanding, and Rami Quwaider, one of the lawyers who conducted the legal awareness raising sessions for the youth.

## **Drawing conclusions and recommendations**

Finally, some conclusions are presented and, as NOVACT's research is directed towards action, some policy recommendations are enacted to inform future programming at different levels and for a multiplicity of actors, given the fact that PVE policy and project making has become a common ground for different stakeholders in the Syrian Crisis Response context in Jordan.

# THE PROJECTS

## **FUTURE OF OUR JOURNALISM: CIVIL SOCIETY EMPOWERMENT**

Written by ARDD team

The Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development [ARDD] developed the 'Future of Our Journalism' [Mustaqbal Sahafutna] project in order to address the structural challenges youth in Zarqa face. With youth unemployment in Jordan at 29.3%, and disproportionately effecting young women,<sup>16</sup> many young Jordanians feel disillusioned, alienated from the political process and believe that they lack agency.

The Syria crisis has compounded this situation, having a profound effect in particular on the population of Zarqa, close to the Syrian border, where the United Nations High Commission for Refugees [UNHCR] has registered 109,353 persons of concern in the governorate.<sup>17</sup> Yet in 2015, the United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], found that provision for youth development from civil society organisations and NGOs in Zarqa was 'lagging behind' other Jordanian cities.<sup>18</sup>

The Future of Our Journalism Project sought to fill that gap in provision, by targeting youth at risk of unemployment in Zarqa and concretely building their capacities. It utilised the model of 'citizen journalism', to foster a culture of engagement and dialogue, enabling youth to identify the issues of concern to them and their communities, and take positive action in addressing them, becoming empowered civil society actors.

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<sup>16</sup> International Labour Organisation, Labour market transitions of young women and men in Jordan, 2014 [p. 3,19] Accessed at: [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_245876.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_245876.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> UNHCR, Syria Regional Response Inter-Agency Information Sharing Portal. Accessed at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/region.php?id=73&country=107>

<sup>18</sup> UNFPA, *Youth Mapping Report 2014-2015* [p.65]. Accessed at: <http://jordan.unfpa.org/publications/youth-mapping-report-2014-2015>

Through the project, thirty-five youth received comprehensive training, providing them with transferable analytical and technical skills, which they are bringing with them into the labor market. They lead debates in their communities, received mentoring sessions from renowned journalists and media figures, and attended field trips, which exposed them to new environments and broadened their experiences. They produced newsletters highlighting the issues their communities are facing, which were distributed widely.

## **BUILDING BRIDGES TO UNDERSTANDING: SOCIAL COHESION**

The Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD), in collaboration with NOVCT [International Institute for Non-Violent Action] developed the project 'Building Bridges in Zarqa: Engaging Young People in Promoting Social Cohesion' in order to contribute to the development of a genuine culture of peace and social cohesion of the Syrian refugee and host community population in Zarqa.

Conflict between refugees and Jordanian national host communities has been documented since the beginning of the ongoing refugee crisis in Jordan. Increases in rents, competition for "income-generating activities," competition for resources [including water], and overcrowding of public services [especially in the areas of health and education] have been identified as major factors in conflict between the two communities in northern Jordan.<sup>19</sup>

In another assessment, 59 per cent of Jordanians and 27 per cent of Syrians surveyed described "uneven access" to employment as a reason for tension, and 43 per cent of Syrians surveyed reported "security issues at work" as a source of tension between the two communities.<sup>20</sup> Syrians

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<sup>19</sup> Franks, Jeffrey. *Evaluating the Effect of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on Stability and Resilience in Jordanian Host Communities*. Accessed at: <http://www.generationsforpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/OX-2015-MS-Report-02.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> REACH. *Livelihoods, Employment and Tensions in Jordanian Communities Hosting Syrian Refugees*. [Amman, Jordan, June 2014]. <http://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/livelihoods-employment-and-tensions-jordanian-communities-hosting-syrian-refugees>

are sometimes perceived by Jordanians as holding an unfair advantage over Jordanians due to the support the refugees receive from international organisations and NGOs.<sup>21</sup>

Security issues in accessing basic services were also reported, including a perceived lack of security for Syrian children in basic education, as schools have become major points of contact for the two communities. Syrian children surveyed in 2014 described bullying as a major reason (and, in some age groups, the primary reason) for failing to attend or dropping out of school.<sup>22</sup> Some refugee families surveyed in 2014 reported moving their households to a different area due to the violence and bullying that their children experienced.

In this context, the project aimed at extending the capabilities and mechanisms of the Syrian and Jordanian youth of Zarqa to promote dialogue and establish relations aimed at the promotion of resilience and social cohesion through out Psychosocial Support (PSS) Sessions, Dialogue Sessions, Legal Awareness Sessions, Conflict Management Skills Training and Training of Trainers in Non-Violent Community Facilitation. Moreover, the project had a component of advocacy through Community Dialogues among Jordanian civil society and local and international public institutions on the importance of youth as enhances social cohesion.

The project team successfully put together a program that engaged 45 beneficiaries both Syrian and Jordanian through the psychosocial support, legal and conflict management sessions. This approach is successfully showing impact in the relationship between youth both Syrians and host community.

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<sup>21</sup> Frankens, Jeffrey. *Evaluating the Effect of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on Stability and Resilience in Jordanian Host Communities*. Accessed at: [http://www.reach-initiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/jeffreyfrankens-10022014-093154-REACH-FCO\\_Syrian-Refugees-in-Host-Communities\\_Preliminary-Impact-Assessment.pdf](http://www.reach-initiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/jeffreyfrankens-10022014-093154-REACH-FCO_Syrian-Refugees-in-Host-Communities_Preliminary-Impact-Assessment.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> REACH. *Access to Education for Syrian Refugee Children and Youth in Jordan Host Communities*. [Amman, Jordan, April 2015]. <http://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/access-education-syrian-refugee-children-and-youth-jordan-host-communities-joint>

# INTERVIEWING THE TRAINERS

## **MOUSA ABU QAOOD**, Conflict Management and Dialogue trainer

**Mousa Abu Qaood** used to work as a TV and radio presenter, before engaging in the project. Now he is working in the field of training, and he is training people in communication as well as leadership and capacity-building. Mousa is part of the National Team for Promoting the Culture of Dialogue. They have been working with youth from both genders, having until the moment trained 5000 youth on dialogue skills. The last initiative in which they have been involved was related to the promotion of freedom of believe among youth.

### **1. When you started the training could you notice tensions or social ruptures among participants in accordance to their origins, Jordanian and Syrian?**

Before the start of the project I was anticipating facing certain issues, mainly coming from the perceptions that both communities had from each other, as for instance Jordanians considering Syrian refugees to have more access to resources or to be hampering Jordanians access to resources because of the support they are receiving as refugees. This is partly related to the hardships they face in their daily lives.

### **2. At any moment during the training those tensions arose and took the form of violent behaviour?**

There was certainly a tendency of violence among those who were present, but I would say that the tendency of violence was not Syrians against Jordanians per se, but also Jordanians versus Jordanians and Syrians versus Syrians, because they were among themselves into disagreement over certain issues. But also there was the overall disagreement between Jordanians and Syrians.

The reason is that these people are coming with their own perceptions and ideas taken from their communities, and the training was the platform where this misperceptions were projected. I would replace the word tendency of violence for fanaticism or intolerance, being tribalism one of the main sources of this intolerance.

**4. At the end of the project could you see an evolution in intra-group dynamics and specifically in relation to this tendency?**

There was a drastic change from the beginning until the end of the project. There was the case of a married couple in the training: At the beginning, whenever the wife would speak the husband would stare at her and try to force her to remain silent, but moving towards the end of the project, she was no longer intimidated by him and she spoke up and expressed herself freely.

**6. To what extent do you think the Conflict Management Skills they acquired during the project can be useful for the participants in their daily life?**

During the training it was obvious that the insights they were receiving were like a shock for some of them, as by reflecting on their own, participants were questioning things that they may had taken for granted. Towards the end of the project people had started to mingle and communicate to each other, building friendships and even adopting each other issues, presenting and projecting them. Syrians and Jordanians were communicating with each other and exchanging thoughts about the issues they are facing and voicing concerns of each other.

Another very important point is that throughout the training there is certain terminologies that have been coined for the participants and about which they are aware of now, such as dialogue, conflict management, tolerance or acceptance of the other. These terms have been developed and participants have become deeply aware of them, and it is one of the reasons why I observed a lot of changes going on.

**5. How would you define in one sentence social cohesion's importance for peace-building?**

If I have to say one thing about this, and it is something I believe in, is that people should grow more aware of the fact that "difference does not mean dispute," specially when it comes to resolve issues between people or issues to be addressed between two communities.

**6. When in the focus groups the participants were asked about violent extremism issues, it was easy to realise that it was not for them a close concern or something with presence in their daily lives and surroundings. In the stage of prevention, we are dealing with participants for who violent extremism rest far way from their environment and concerns. How did you address this issue?**

Prevention of Violent Extremism [PVE] can be fashionable for a lot of people now. But also the wrong interpretation of it and then projection in terms of programming can lead to unfavourable results, such as stigmatising people with beards. I could cite myself as an example, they would take me as an extremist or literally as member of the Muslim Brotherhood. Reflecting on my previous experience as someone who does training with youth on freedom of believe, we do not tackle freedom of believe exclusively as the freedom to express and practice a certain religion openly and freely, but rather we come around that by explaining that difference does not lead to demonising the other, but to accepting the other and tolerating differences.

**7. What is the face of violence that has presence in participants lives? What kind of conflicts do they confront and need to resolve peacefully?**

To start with, for refugees to be displaced from their country is a first form of violence that they face and that they have been subjected to. But also being refugee in a host country exposes them to a certain type of violence, technically the non-acceptance of the host community to their presence, because for the host community they are seen merely as refugees who are competing with them for the resources. The best approach to address this is to work interchangeably between the two communities to make them more sensitised to the issues that each of them are facing, equally for Syrians and for Jordanians. Jordanians need to be aware of the issues that Syrians here are facing, first as a result of the violence in their country and also in terms of livelihood problems faced in Jordan and how difficult it is for them to cope.

Moreover, there were issues with violence that is practiced on participants by their parents or by their family. We can talk of domestic violence or pressure that would impact youth negatively. But also, there are the socially received patterns of violence that affect both parties. Jordanians on one hand are being fed of the idea that refugees are aliens to the country and they are here to steal the resources and opportunities, while Syrians are being fed of the idea that Jordanians are exploiting

refugees' vulnerabilities for their own gain. These misperceptions overlap in both communities and put one against the other.

**8. What recommendations would you do to the governmental actors and NGOs working with youth in peace-building issues?**

This project was for me one of the most unique projects that I worked with, because of the topics that it addressed and the challenges that the projects and the participants posed by themselves. For future programming, if we are talking about preventing Violent Extremism, it is necessary that we address issues of dialogue and communication on the one hand but also freedom of expression and freedom of believe. They are very tight to PVE because society is growing more diverse and we should provide the tools to accept this diversity rather than to reject it or to act against it.

One negative aspect of how PVE is being addressed currently is that it is tackled as merely a product of the religion of Islam. Projecting Islam as the main source of violence may lead to more trouble than solutions in the long-run. We should address violence and extremism from multiple perspectives and not limited to the religion of Islam, what leads us to islamophobia.

## **RAMI QUWAIDER**, Legal Awareness trainer

**Rami Quwaider** is a lawyer who works with ARDD. His engagement with the project consisted of two sessions in which the topic of labour was discussed. Precisely, the sessions covered legal challenges for youth in the work force. The discussions were organised in a manner that aimed to bridge opinions that Jordanians and Syrians may have regarding the other in terms of their labour needs, engagement in the work force, as well as in terms of livelihood. The focus was on showing that everyone is facing certain challenges and everyone must acknowledge the challenges that are being faced by the other community.

### **1. When you started the training could you notice tensions or social ruptures among participants in accordance to their origins?**

In the sessions that I conducted there were not a lot of tensions. People were projecting their concerns and discussion was taking place in a healthy manner and facilitating this discussion lead to everyone growing more aware of the challenges that each of them is facing. But I attribute it to the efforts of my colleagues in the project, who had trained the participants in dialogue skills ahead of my sessions.

### **2. Were participants from the different communities able to identify areas of common interests even if the challenges they face may differ?**

Of course there were unique challenges faced by each of the communities, but there are common challenges, not only for Syrians or Jordanians, but it is perhaps cross-cutting to labour in general: the wage gap, the lower wages people are receiving, as well as the usual disputes in employers and employees relationship. Also there was common understanding among participants that these challenges may have specificities for certain groups but they may be collectively a result of political and economic dynamics and events that are taking place in the region and in the context of Jordan.

### **3. Why is important to invest particularly in youth, as a collective, to empower them as actors of social change by fostering awareness on their rights?**

Investing in youth will lead to many things. First of all, the right investment and the proper interventions that are done specifically in the framework of Preventing Violent Extremism will lead to reducing the amount of violence that people might have in between them. Enhancing communication and dialogue skills will positively impact the development efforts that are being done in Jordan because having a solid culture of dialogue and rejection of violence as a common notion that everyone is embracing will certainly lead to improvements in development terms. It will also be reflected in terms of society and it is, overall, progress. It is very important also because the largest percentage of people in Jordan is youth, that is why Jordan is called a youth society.

#### **4. Do you think legal awareness sessions should be a component of peace-building projects? Why?**

Legal empowerment is key to any effort that seeks to build peace because if people are more aware of their rights and the means to assert them they will know which venues to seek to make their rights respected. That will absolutely reduce tension or the need to resort to violence to assert their rights. Accordingly, knowing rights and knowing obligations will help people to avoid challenges, disputes and legal issues that may otherwise result from their lack of knowledge on their rights and duties. Legal empowerment and legal awareness will certainly impact on the dispute resolutions mechanisms that are taking place between the youth, in the future between themselves and their employers, and so far and so forth. They are key to any effort to peace-building or promotion of stability at social and community levels.

Moreover, knowledge of laws might also lead to awareness that would lead everyone to collectively avoid small problems escalating to bigger problems. There is the example of birth certificates. As here in Jordan some people is unaware of the piece of law that says that everyone who is born in Jordan is entitled to a birth certificate, some of them are not having their birth registered, what in a matter of 10-15 years lead us to have a generation of stateless children. That can lead to bigger problems because these stateless children may be vulnerable to human trafficking, they may be victims of being attracted to violent extremist groups, something which will ultimately have impacts in peace, security and stability in a wider scale.

## ABOUT US

### About NOVACT

The International Institute for Nonviolent Action promotes international peace building actions in conflict situations. Through a global network of experts and activists in the Middle East, Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia, the Institute supports nonviolent movements, working for change and social transformation, and develops nonviolent interventions to protect vulnerable communities in conflict situations. As a committed and politically independent actor, the Institute promotes actions, innovative ideas, research, and training to influence the policies of defense, security and foreign policy in Europe and other international contexts. Established in 1999, during the last 15 years we have developed more than 300 international projects upon request from conflict parties both state and non-state actors and international organizations and agencies. NOVACT' credibility is founded on its field-based relations. Its task is not only to understand local realities, but to offer support to local civil society and social movements through capacity building.

[www.novact.org](http://www.novact.org)

### About OPEV

The Observatory to Prevent Extremist Violence (OPEV) is an active platform of civil society organisations from across the Euro-Mediterranean Region aiming to bring a constructive contribution to prevent violent extremism. In view of the lessons learned over the past decades and the challenges that lie ahead, this platform will coordinate the efforts to follow-up the implementation of the Plan of Action of the Euro-Mediterranean civil society to prevent all forms of violent extremism. The OPEV will not follow the State dynamics and will not support any war against terrorism.

[www.opev.org](http://www.opev.org)



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