Media in Lebanon has major influence on the peace environment and its outlets are often polarized and thus sometimes play a role in fueling conflict during sensitive periods. But at the same time, media can also inspire to shape the way people think and act, and foster understanding. To this end, the UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” project works on providing positive media spaces and promoting rational discourse by publishing news supplements on issues related to civil peace and the repercussions of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon. UNDP Lebanon also monitored the implementation of the “Journalists’ Pact for Strengthening Civil Peace in Lebanon” with Maharat Foundation. It is training participating media outlets staff on topics related to the Pact, based on a media toolkit developed to help media institutions better implement the Pact. In addition, UNDP Lebanon is working on raising awareness on fake news due to its impact on social cohesion and human rights.

Since 2012, UNDP has been supporting the participation of a number of journalists, writers, senior and well-known media professionals, researchers and artists residing in Lebanon, in its “Peace Building in Lebanon” News Supplement. This supplement, published by the UNDP is distributed every four months in
After the publication of each supplement, discussion sessions around each of its issues are organized in different areas of the country. These open discussions aim at bringing together the supplements’ audience and contributors who are given a chance to present their articles and the reasons behind their choice of topics. These sessions are also an opportunity to gather feedback on both the format and content of the supplements and collect suggestions and recommendations for the upcoming releases.

DISCUSSION SESSIONS: A SAFE SPACE FOR DIALOGUE

After the publication of each supplement, discussion sessions around each of its issues are organized in different areas of the country. These open discussions aim at bringing together the supplements’ audience and contributors who are given a chance to present their articles and the reasons behind their choice of topics. These sessions are also an opportunity to gather feedback on both the format and content of the supplements and collect suggestions and recommendations for the upcoming releases.

SUCCESS STORY
FIGHTING PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION WITH FACTS AND FIGURES

Nora has been unemployed for a year now. She took part in a discussion session organized by the UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” project held on Tuesday 22 August, 2017, at Dar El-Nimer in Hamra, Beirut. “I used to blame Syrians for taking our jobs”, said Nora, “But now that I have read the news supplement you are discussing today, and heard several points of view, I understood that I should have a different perspective on this issue and should not blame anyone nor throw any prejudice”.

Arabic with An-Nahar newspaper while the English version is distributed with The Daily Star and the French version with L’Orient-Le Jour.

These supplements provide hate-free media spaces and promote rational discourse in addressing controversial topics. They also encourage journalists, writers and media practitioners to adopt objective approaches free of stereotyping and misconceptions, and to offer conflict-sensitive coverage in the media. In a country known for its polarization, this supplement succeeded in bringing together participants from different backgrounds using one common platform to debate issues in a constructive way.
In 2013, UNDP undertook an extensive participatory process that led to the formulation and production of the “Journalists’ Pact for Strengthening Civil Peace in Lebanon”, in collaboration with the Ministry of Information. The Pact was endorsed and signed by 29 national media outlets. Through its different articles, it sets the ground for objective and conflict-sensitive media coverage.

Between 2015 and 2017, UNDP in collaboration with Maharat Foundation monitored the implementation of this Pact by publishing media monitoring studies. These studies covered all topics and themes raised in the clauses of the Pact such as racism, hate speech, positive initiatives, role of newscast introductions, municipal elections and talks shows, among others. The studies, debated by representatives of the participating media outlets, media professional and practitioners, offered qualitative and quantitative analysis and presented a set of recommendations for a better media performance.

During this session, Nora shared her experience with an audience of 60 journalists, activists, students and university professors. They came to discuss one of the issues of the news supplement published by the UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” project funded by Germany, on August 7, 2017. Sobhiya Najjar, a news reporter, journalist and a participant in this supplement, presented the stories she had written in the supplement on the suffering of Syrian workers in the country of asylum at the social and legal levels, as well as their relationship with the Lebanese host community. “If we don’t talk about the sufferings of the refugees, and their pain, we become a heartless and ruthless society”, said Sobhiya.

JOURNALISTS’ PACT FOR STRENGTHENING CIVIL PEACE IN LEBANON: MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTATION

In 2013, UNDP undertook an extensive participatory process that led to the formulation and production of the “Journalists’ Pact for Strengthening Civil Peace in Lebanon”, in collaboration with the Ministry of Information. The Pact was endorsed and signed by 29 national media outlets. Through its different articles, it sets the ground for objective and conflict-sensitive media coverage. Between 2015 and 2017, UNDP in collaboration with Maharat Foundation monitored the implementation of this Pact by publishing media monitoring studies. These studies covered all topics and themes raised in the clauses of the Pact such as racism, hate speech, positive initiatives, role of newscast introductions, municipal elections and talks shows, among others. The studies, debated by representatives of the participating media outlets, media professional and practitioners, offered qualitative and quantitative analysis and presented a set of recommendations for a better media performance.
“Let’s hear it from you! Whoever is against news introductions please stand up”, Mariam Al Bassam, Managing Editor of primetime news and political shows at New TV, asked the audience. The hall was immediately blustering with “NOs” as the spectators stood up. Mariam was one of four key speakers at the open discussion session titled “TV Newscasts Introductions and Establishment of Civil Peace in Lebanon: In Memory and Remembrance” organized by Maharat Foundation in partnership with the UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” project funded by Germany. Around 400 enthusiastic participants from the civil society, students from Lebanese universities, representatives from NGOs, and media professors participated in the sizzling dialogue which took place on Tuesday April 12th 2016, in Sunflower Theater, Tayyouneh - an area labeled as a “demarcation line” that split neighboring communities during the civil war.

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Follow the UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” project’s activities on:
#PeaceBuildinginLebanon UNDP Lebanon

All these activities were implemented between 2013 and 2017 with the generous contributions of: