

The Civil Society Fund

FINAL REPORT

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION INTERVENTIONS

The total report must not exceed 6 pages (this cover page not included).

PURPOSE

The final report is the Danish organisation's report to the Civil Society Fund. Your reflections are important for documentation and learning. Accordingly, the local partner is not supposed to draw up this document on its own.

The final report can be used as a tool in your partnership to enhance transparency and joint responsibility as described in "Position Paper No. 4: Partnership and strengthening of civil society".

The final report is also added to the Danish organisation's track record, and will be taken into account in future assessments of applications from the Danish organisation involving the same or other partners in line with the Guidelines for the Civil Society Fund.

CISU aims to send feedback on the report to the Danish organisation no later than two months after reception.

Danish applicant organisation	Zaher - Grow to Learn		
Intervention title	Learning gardens as a tool for development in Lebanon		
Contact person's name and email address	Iben von Holck, ibenholck@protonmail.com		
Reference number			
Country(-ies)	Denmark and Lebanon		
Period of the intervention	01.05.2019 - 15.10.2020		
Total budget	489.959,00	Actual expenditure	479.959,00*

*awaiting the finalization from the auditor

15.04.2021

Date

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EVALUATION

LEARNING GARDENS AS A TOOL FOR
DEVELOPMENT IN LEBANON 2019 - 2020

Citizen participation intervention
Funded by the Civil Society Fund (CISU)

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1. OBJECTIVES AND OUTPUTS ACHIEVED

1.1 The interventions achievement of objective(s) set out in the application

OBJECTIVE 1: Strengthen the education and involvement of 60 stigmatized children and youth 125 children and youth participated in 46 learning garden workshops in four locations. 60 participated in a workshop programme and 65 participated in ad hoc workshops. The teachers reported an average engagement score of 88,95 out of 100. 8 out of 10 of the older participants scored higher in a post-test than a pre-test. For the younger participants, local coordinators described how their behaviour and reflections changed towards plants, animals, trash, food and their environment during the program. All participants were involved in implementing and nurturing the garden, and each local coordinator reported how they shared knowledge, skills and experiences from the workshops with their families and local communities.

OBJECTIVE 2: Facilitate four sustainable gardens for local schools/communities and enhance social cohesion Four sustainable learning gardens were implemented in the locations: (1) Malaak's school in Halba, (2) Buzuruna Juzuruna's educational farm in Sa'ad-neyel and (3)+(4) Action Aid's community centers in Jib Jineen and Baalbek. Garden 1 and 2 are sustained. Garden 3 was terminated as the garden space proved insufficient to meet the learning outcomes. Garden 4 has to be re-build in Action Aid's new center. The local coordinators reported enhanced social cohesion amongst participants, as the gardens facilitated new spaces where people from different backgrounds came together in joint activities. In Baalbek and Sa'ad-neyel, the gardens provided a new space for resting and socialising for the community.

OBJECTIVE 3: Capacity building in our local partner organisations, and enhanced advocacy for a Lebanese learning garden movement Our local partners engaged in a network to share resources and expertise. At a kick-off meeting, they identified a lack of pedagogical capacities. The local NGO Jibal was invited and their expertise on environmental education became a resource for all partners through trainings and development of pedagogical approaches. A common knowledge sharing platform was established on Podio. Jibal hosted a knowledge-sharing meeting at the end to gather experience and plan for the future.

Achievement in %

Achievement of Objective 1	100 %
Achievement of Objective 2	75 %
Achievement of Objective 3	80 %

1.2 Persons reached by this intervention

Primary target group directly affected 125 by the intervention, est.:

Secondary target group indirectly affect 17 or involved in the intervention, est.:

1.3 Reflections on the planned intervention activities, outputs and changes

Outputs for Obj. 1: Education and involvement of the participating children and youth

"60 children and youth will improve their knowledge on biological processes, environmental awareness, healthy nutrition e.g. cooking and making produce from garden crops"

- **Buzuruna Juzuruna (BZJ)** held 11 weekly workshops from June - September at their farm for 25 local Syrian children, majorly not enrolled in school. Each workshop had a practical part in the garden and a classroom lesson with themes such as: Vegetable families, life of the soil, insects, pollution and plastic's impact on the environment and how to reproduce seeds. The participants had been engaged in learning garden activities before, and BZJ could build on this to engage them in conversations on human impact on the planet, natural resources, endangered species and water pollution. BZJ observed through the year and after the project implementation that the children started to change their behavior to their natural environment such as sorting and throwing out the trash, especially with the organic waste that they had started to manage in their own compost and use for fertilization in their learning garden. BZJ also observed more curiosity and interest in animals, insects, plants and nature after the childrens continued participation in the project. They now know names of large numbers of insects and birds.
- **Food Heritage Foundation (FHF)** hosted 9 bi-weekly workshops from August - October and four workshops in January 2020, in Malaak's educational center. The participants were local Syrian children enrolled with Malaak. FHF focused on practical engagement and production, such as making compost tea, planting, preparing the soil, and harvesting crops to be used in the school kitchen to prepare meals for all students. FHF and Malaak decided to have a high fluctuation of children so more could take part. In total 65 children participated in ad-hoc workshops, on average 15 each time. Although this approach had benefits, our partners found it insufficient for consistent learning and social outcomes for

each child. A group was selected for the workshops in January on how to make traditional produce based on the garden's crops, and about animals in Lebanon and how to protect these.

- In the **Action Aid (AA) centers**, 10 workshops were held in each garden from September to December about e.g. food safety, nature and insects, plant beds, food processing, rose crafting, compost, environmental awareness and DIY gardening. The participants were local young women, mainly displaced Syrians. The local coordinator reported how during the program, many of the women began to grow organically in their backyards and talk about the benefits of organic vegetables, which was a new concept to them. The trainer Wael conducted a pre and post test showing 80% of the women had increased their knowledge during the programme. At the same time, he reported challenges with their engagement which he argued was caused by them participating to receive transportation reimbursement (paid due to their precarious situation), more than to obtain the skills offered by the programme and by their family obligations at home (thus local babysitting was arranged).

"60 children and youth can create a garden by organic, inexpensive and traditional farming methods"

In each garden, the workshops engaged the participants in implementing the gardens step-by-step. At **BZJ's** farm, the trainers supported the children to work on their own plot. Each selected a variety of seeds and seedlings of vegetables and flowers from the farm to plant. In **Malaak**, a participatory approach was adopted starting from the basic knowledge of the participants to develop and support their skills with additional information. The children took part in planting, nursing and harvesting the garden being created inside their school. FHF experienced how the children, all from agricultural communities, were already curious about traditional, agricultural practices and the workshops gave them a place to garden themselves - often not possible in their current camps. In **AA's** centers, the participants built the wicking beds supervised by Wael to plant seedlings. Jibal held workshops in the centers on how to apply the learnings at home within own means. Maryam reported: "The participants learned how to grow their own garden and organic vegetables to save expenses. After they got to know each other, they gathered to discuss what organic food they would do for their families". In the centers, SOILS tested a new design for wicking beds, but the local coordinators and SOILS evaluated this being too difficult and expensive for the participants to implement at home.

"Educational material have been developed and shared with participants to bring home"

red with participants to bring home"

- **BZJ** Adapted their curriculum developed for adults to a children audience by sharing it between the teachers that worked to make each part specifically for the target group and included practical exercises, outdoor games, participative activities, role games, videos and songs (see e.g. the song "nahna el khodrawat" on youtube, in total four songs became known by heart by the children), power point, drawings and colorings (wild animals, vegetables, insects, poster of an integral farm, etc), cutouts, etc.
- **FHF**: Two informational posters were designed by FHF. They were posted at the school and distributed to the children for home use as well.
- **AA**: All participants, local coordinators and volunteers received a book developed by BZJ with detailed and illustrative guides to different aspects of organic gardening.
- **Paedagogical competences**: Jibal made two training of trainers (ToT) in the beginning of the intervention to teach teachers from each garden on teaching approaches, workshop development and pedagogy. At the end of the programme, Jibal designed and tested a workshop series for all partners with four subjects: water, public space, food sovereignty and waste management for age group 7 - 10 years.

Outputs for Obj. 2 Facilitate a sustainable garden for the local school/community

"4 organic learning gardens have been created, with space for planting and an outdoor classroom"

Three new gardens were established in Baalbek, Halba and Jib Jineen, and one was advanced in Saadnayel. **BZJ** expanded their learning garden at their farm by creating an outdoor classroom in a beduin tent, and divided the garden into lines of star shape, each plot taken care of by the same small groups of children to enhance their ownership. In **Halba**, an unused plot inside the school was transformed into a production garden with various herbs, vegetables and fruit trees. **Malaak** and **FHF** developed a plan for the summer season production and assessed the needs in the garden space, e.g. an irrigation system, seeds and transplants and planned field visits from technical support. Later a plan for the autumn-winter season was made to withstand the climatic conditions. A handmade greenhouse and mini tunnel units were built in the garden. In **Baalbek**, the garden was created on a patio at the entrance, and in **Jib Jineen** at the parking lot in front of the house. These gardens consisted of wicking beds designed by **SOILS** following permaculture principles. In Baalbek, furniture made of recycled material was placed at the space. In Jib Jineen, the scarce garden space was a challenge for the learning and social outcomes. Both gardens are now

terminated - in Baalbek because the center moved location, in Jib Jineen due to lack of space. The boxes proved to be technically challenging but flexible: When the project terminated in Jib Jineen, a workshop was held to plant perennials to add value to the centers with less need of maintenance. In Baalbek, the beds have been transported to the new center. "Ad-hoc activities have been held at each location for a broader scope of people from the local communities to learn about the activities and the participants' engagement"

"A sense of improved social cohesion is reported in the communities close to the garden"

New communal spaces 46 Lebanese and 159 non-Lebanese individuals participated in the 47 workshops, thus the learning gardens facilitated spaces for the local communities to come together across divides. This being important with tensions between Lebanese and Syrians in Lebanon on a rise since the conflict in Syria broke out. The Malaak and BZJ gardens facilitated gender inclusive spaces by mixing children. In the AA centers, the participants were only female, but the team of trainers, managers, coordinators and volunteers was mixed to show that everyone can be a gardener. In the locations where the gardens were accessible for more people, it added positively to the community. In Jib Jineen, the participants' families were invited to a workshop on planting leftover seeds and seedlings in recycled bottles to bring home. BZJ and Malaak invited the children's families to a harvest celebration at the end of the programme.

Spaces for socializing and leisure In the BZJ garden, the children were free to harvest and play inside their learning garden and the whole farm. Most of the children participating in BZJ were arriving from the Idlib war zone few months or maximum two years before the project implementation. Most of them were very shy, showing loneliness signs, and probably deep psycho chocking remains in-them. The further into the programme, the more they started to look more serene, playing and turning to the other and the outdoor and showing self-confidence. BZJ further organized a trip to the archeological site of Anjar for the children and their parents and reported that the day brought joy and enhanced social cohesion. In Baalbek, Maryam reported how the garden's location at the entrance changed the space: "Before, the staff didn't notice the entrance of the centre. After the garden was established, the staff found a space there to rest and feel in nature and the ladies of other projects found a safe space to sit and interact. Local neighbours noted the garden and asked about each plant and what we are going to do in the future. Some tried to plant some veggies in their gardens and asked about organic farming, and shared their knowledge with neighbours who became interested." Snack breaks and events were important for social interaction amongst

"The project allowed the children to be out of their usual environments and homes, to take some fresh air in a safe place and be part of a place that is interesting by its diversity of activities and people. They got to learn about things that are around them all the time (nature, vegetables...) and that they would not necessarily learn about in school"
Ferdi, Buzurna Juzurna farm

participants and more broadly.

Giving children an active role BZJ reports how the existence of a children learning garden inside their organic school farm, allows a physical place owned by children and marks the importance of bringing children to be a part of "experimental agro-ecology". In Malaak, the vegetables and herbs produced by the children in the garden had an important social value for the local community: "From the garden production that was made, we helped the local families and we used the vegetables in the school kitchen to feed our students." - Kristelle, local coordinator in Malaak.

Outputs for Obj. 3: Capacity building within our local partner organisations, and enhanced advocacy for a Lebanese learning garden movement

"A co-creational knowledge sharing platform (Podio), 2 network meetings with local partners and a strategy for further advocacy for a learning garden movement in Lebanon has been conducted"

In May, the project kicked off with a network meeting for the local coordinators and trainers. A previous partner, SOILS, was invited and became part of the network. Zaher introduced Podio, a software programme for monitoring that was used to share knowledge, plans, pictures and workshop updates. Each shared their visions for the learning gardens, and they identified each other's competences and resources. They identified a lack of competences on pedagogical aspects that resulted in a collaboration with Jibal, a local NGO with expertise in environmental and social education. During the project, the partners reached out to each other to share knowledge, methods, expertise, workshop plans and educational material. In autumn 2020, a second network meeting facilitated by Jibal was planned for a broad range of local organizations with interest in learning gardens in Lebanon. Due to the economic crisis, the uprisings and COVID-19, Jibal scaled it down to an online meeting collectivizing experiences and identifying challenges for the future: educational challenges (conventional education, curriculum, student habits, staff), technical challenges (government institutions, access to land) and financial challenges (economic models, financially sustainable models). A plan was made for a in-person meeting for all partners on how to tackle these challenges.

2. PARTNERSHIP AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

2.1 How the intervention has strengthened partnership and created mutual gains for participant partners

The intervention was organized in a partnership between Zaher, FHF and BJZ with AA, Malaak, SOILS and Jibal as subpartners. The organizational design was a challenge, but brought strengths and mutual gains:

Sharing resources All partners are small organizations, thus working collectively enabled new possibilities beyond the capacity of each organization - e.g. testing high-quality educational materials and teaching methods, techniques for garden design, hiring local trainers and coordinators and supporting them and also sharing expertise, e.g. FHF gave workshops on food processing, BJZ gave workshops on seed production and SOILS designed and supervised the gardens in the AA centers. The strength of the collaboration became visible when all partners took part in creating a workshop programme in the AA centers, in which each hosted workshops within their expertise.

Pedagogical approaches Jibal's knowledge on educational aspects became a resource to all partners, as they found this capacity to be highly relevant when working with children and youth. Jibal hosted a training on teaching approaches for all local trainers in the beginning of the project. Later Jibal facilitated a knowledge sharing meeting and used their prior research to develop and test a set of workshops for children aged 7 - 10 years to be used by all partners in the gardens. This became a great opportunity for Jibal as well to strengthen their competences in teaching environmental pedagogy. BJZ mentions how "the pedagogical activity focusing on children allows our team to get new skills and know-how and permits new partnership with local and international organizations on the topic of learning sustainable development for children and even for adults".

Local employment Several of our partners got the opportunity to hire local people as trainers or coordinators. BJZ employed Manal, a local Syrian woman who had undergone training with BJZ, as assistant trainer in the Jib Jineen center. FHF trained and hired a local student, Haydar, to be trainer in Baalbek. Maryam, Ranim and Kristelle were hired as local coordinators. Hiring local people proved great benefits for local ownership, connection to the local communities, for local job opportunities and developing competences within the local communities. Simultaneously, it became clear that a training programme and ongoing supervision is needed to undertake the task of engaging local people in carrying out educational learning garden activities and to be involved in implementing the gardens.

Addressing power structures We had ongoing critical discussions on being a partnership between the Global North and South with Zaher in the powerful position as donor.

2.2 Citizen participation, volunteering and/or civil organisation in Lebanon and Denmark

All partners showed great dedication and participation. Wael (SOILS) and Salem (BJZ) often went to the AA centers to supervise. FHF several times supported AA on financial matters. The local coordinators maintained the gardens between workshops in the AA centers. At Halbal, Abd Majid, a local janitor, assisted the workshops, and took ownership in maintaining the space, e.g. building a greenhouse out of recycled materials. Several participants in Jib Jineen and Baalbek made gardens at home, and some participants even grew plants around the city.

It is important to address the term "voluntariness" in the fragile context of Lebanon, where an increasing number of people's economies are rapidly declining. The Danish privilege of "voluntarism" needs to be applied in the garden communities with attention to people's precarity. "Unfortunately, there was no time for this (volunteering) due to the crisis and the economical situation. The civil organizations' orientation was more to cope with this crisis." - Maryam, local coordinator in Baalbek. As we saw in the Malaak school, harvest from the garden can be distributed to volunteers as a way of meeting dire needs. The trainer Wael addressed the challenge around paying participants transport reimbursement and its effect on their motivation in the content.

In Denmark, Zaher relies on voluntary work and this project was an opportunity to welcome more volunteers to engage in administrative, communication and monitoring work tasks. An important part of the volunteers' work was to host events and engage in network activities in Denmark and internationally, that make more people aware of the work of Zaher's and our partners, and the mission and vision of this project.

"Before the project, the participants did not know how to plant and depended highly on the market to get their vegetables. The project coincided with the crisis in Lebanon and the economical situation is now so bad that most people can't get their vegetables from the market because of the high cost of living. Till now I still get messages from the participants about how much planting their own gardens help them to insure their needs during this crisis. Otherwise, some of their families will have difficulties to get their daily food." Maryam, Action Aid Baalbek coordinator

3. CHALLENGES AND ADJUSTMENT / 4. MONITORING AND LEARNING

3.1 Greatest challenges in implementation

Internal challenges According to our partners, there was a lack of sufficient communication and organizational coordination around logistics and payments. SOILS mentions that 'roles and stakeholders' were not clearly identified and coordinated. This was caused by a complex partner setup and many new collaborations, the fact that SOILS and Jibal were included after the project design had been made, and the unfortunate event that our lead local partner FHF faced sudden serious health problems early in the project. The difficulties around logistics, due to Lebanon being a cash-only society and due to large geographical distances between the gardens and Beirut, needed greater attention.

Economic crisis, uprising and COVID-19 An economic crisis hit Lebanon in summer 2019, including bank closures, 'dollar capital flight' and inflation. The banks introduced curbs on cash withdrawals and other unofficial capital controls. In practice, the banks were closed for long periods of time, did not keep agreements and kept demanding new documentation. In October 2019 an uprising broke out, with roadblocks and protests causing multiple delays. Then COVID-19 broke out and the harvest celebrations and knowledge sharing meeting were pushed, cancelled or moved online.

Lack of local trainers Inclusion of local trainers required a high degree of supervision to meet the need.

Creating a complete workshop program Our partners did not have much prior experience to build on.

3.2 Changes and adjustments in the intervention

Moving funding from material to activities Due to the financial crises and the challenges of getting cash, it was not possible to buy the materials for the Jib Jineen and Baalbek gardens. The funding was instead spent on activities, e.g. Jibal's development of a series of workshops benefitting all partners.

Adding pedagogical and permacultural expertise Jibal added pedagogical competencies that build capacity in all partners through training, discussions and sharing of material. SOILS permacultural expertise was used in the design and supervision of the AA gardens.

Prolongation Due to the financial crises and COVID-19, the project was prolonged until October 2020, when the last activities could be conducted or had to be changed or cancelled.

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4.1 Ways of gathering and systemizing experiences in

the course and at the end of the intervention

The local coordinators registered information about the participants and each workshop in Podio, and shared pictures from each workshop on WhatsApp. On a bi-weekly basis, Zaher was in contact with their partners to discuss work status and sharing lessons learned. Halfway through the project, our local partners filled out a financial midterm report followed by meetings on how the project activities and spending were progressing and which adjustments were needed. At the end of the project, the local coordinators wrote a narrative report to share experiences and summarise the work from each site. The project ended with an evaluation filled out by all partners, backed by interviews with selected actors in the project. The gathered audiovisual material, the statistics in Podio, the narrative reports, the financial midterm report and the final evaluation, is the data set of systematized experiences and knowledge from this project.

4.2 Monitoring and capacity building tools/methods

x Mango Health Check
x Accountability Dialogue Tool
x Podio

4.3 Most significant lessons learned and experiences

Learning gardens offer an opportunity for stigmatized children and youth in Lebanon to be involved in local ecological problems

Lack of space hinders outcomes In Jib Jineen, the lack of space didn't provide much opportunity for practical engagement, outdoor classroom teaching was difficult and there was not space for leisure or other usage of the garden. This had negative impact on educational and social outcomes.

Long term engagement increases outcomes Comparing the ad hoc participation of children at Ma-laak's school, and the long term participation of the children at BZJ's farm, engaging the same children in a consistent workshop program over time allows more substantial educational and social outcomes.

Quality education requires systematic work The idea of learning gardens for children is still new in Lebanon, and to develop high quality educational content and approaches requires resources, time and in-depth focus.

Simple, inexpensive garden design is beneficial To include local coordinators and participants in the implementation, minimize logistics and supervision needed and for the participants to be able to replicate their new skills at home, e.g. replacing geo-textile in

5. DIFFERENCES THE INTERVENTION HAS MADE

/ 6. INTERVENTION-RELATED INFORMATION IN DENMARK

AA center Baalbek garden to an inexpensive material. Wicking beds can be replicated for areas without access to garden spaces and produce food.

Complex partner setup and lack of manager challenges implementation A clear local project leadership managing logistics and collaboration between partners was lacking due to health issues in our lead partner organization. This became evident in the delays and challenges around the AA centers gardens. Lack of clear outcomes and objectives for some partners.

Local engagement is important but requires supervision Hiring locals as coordinators, trainers and volunteers brought local attachment as they nursed and watered the plants and build new constructions in the garden. But it is important to pay attention to the resources for supervision that this praxis requires and a need for more training days.

Production can have value With the food and economic crisis in Lebanon, the learning garden crops and skills became increasingly important. During lockdown, the local janitor in Malaak nursed the garden in exchange for crops for his community. This could be a model for active citizenship in fragile communities.

4.4. How these lessons and experiences feed into a possible future interventions

A more simple setup with fewer partners and fewer locations should be set up: With one partner organization responsible for the project who appoints one person to manage the project locally. Each garden should have one responsible coordinator. When choosing locations, gardens in community spaces with soil and that many people have access to proves fruitful to local ownership, ongoing maintenance, educational outcome and a social function. Inexpensive and simple garden designs that can be replicated need to be further developed. Dedicated time should be set aside for discussions between local trainers, coordinators and volunteers on the selection of participants and the distribution of the gardens' harvest. With regards to the educational aspect; choosing one age group makes it easier to develop quality educational material and training approaches that can be published and shared. This gives an opportunity to involve more children in more locations in learning garden activities but also strengthen the learning outcome for the children already involved. Working with the same children for a longer period of time shows greater educational and social outcomes. As there is a need for more local trainers, a training school for the local trainers should take place to ensure their sup-

port to undertake teaching in the learning gardens.

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5.1 Most important changes that occurred as a consequence of the intervention

Four new learning gardens were created in communities with local stigmatized children and youth.. They got an opportunity to be directly involved in their community as the gardens in various degrees became spaces for learning, food production and leisure for both the participants and their communities. Their education was strengthened through practical engagement and classroom teaching on themes such as plants, animals, organic gardening and environmental topics such as waste and water management. The younger participants started to show different behaviour and reflections towards the nature and animals around them. Older participants started to grow at home and discuss the benefits of organic gardening. The partners of the project gained professionalism in creating educational content and a seasonal plan. A local partnership network supported this work in which they shared expertises, experiences and discussed challenges for learning gardens in Lebanon.

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6.1 Primary information activities

Zaher shared ongoing information about the project on their Facebook page, with 646 followers, with an average reach of 150-1500 persons each post and on their Instagram with 265 followers reaching about 150-300 people each post. Zaher also presented the project at Folkemødet and at a Christmas market at Nørrebro which was mentioned in the Danish newspaper Politiken. Zaher and two partners collaborated with the organisation Bioversity International on using the learning gardens in Lebanon as a case study for a new book on learning gardens and through this becoming part of a rising international learning garden network.

6.2 Aims and target group of information activities.

Inform people in Denmark with interest in sustainable gardening, social interventions for vulnerable children and the conflict in Syria on local, active participation to counter dominant discourses.

6.3 Extent to which the aims of the information activities have been met

To a high degree given our budget on 1000 DKK.

APPENDIX

LEARNING GARDENS AS A TOOL FOR
DEVELOPMENT IN LEBANON 2019 - 2020

Citizen participation intervention
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APPENDIX 1

Workshop programmes

Buzurna Juzurna (Sa'adneyel)

Age group: 6 - 12

Themes

1. The vegetable family
2. The health of the garden
3. Compost and the garden
4. Health
5. Nature
6. Drawing lesson
7. Treatment for pest and disease management
8. Insects of the garden
9. Historical and green field trip
10. Seeds

FOOD HERITAGE FOUNDATION AND MALAAK (Halba)

Age group: 6 - 12

Themes

1. Planting aromatics
2. Green vertical wall weeding and preparation for planting
3. Irrigation, installation of a compost unit and planting herb seeds
4. Checking the compost pile, monitor temperature and humidity
5. Weeding, turning the soil and planting new transplants and seeds
6. Planting 275 seedlings, remove dead plants and harvest for fatayer
7. Checking the compost pile and installing benches
8. Making compost tea
9. New soil preparation, mix with home made fertilizer from compost and creating plant boxes of recycled material
10. Biodiversity principles: Identification of aromatic and medicinal plants in the garden, wild edible trees and photosynthesis
11. Mouneh processing with vegetables from the garden

ACTION AID CENTERS (Baalbek and Jib Jineen)

Age group: 15 - 30

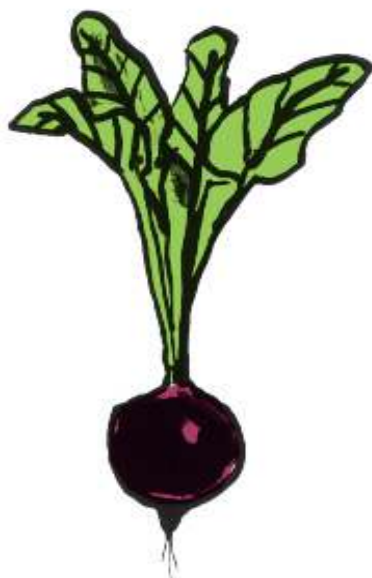
Themes

1. Preparing wicker beds with plastic and geo textile
2. Preparing wicker beds with soil and compost
3. Planting seedlings
4. Filling raised beds
5. Planting aromatics
6. Basic knowledge of soils
7. Insects of the garden
8. Historical and green field trip
9. Seeds
10. Food produce
11. Food produce

APPENDIX 2

Participant registration

	BUZURNA JUZURNA	FOOD HERITAGE FOUNDATION/ MALAAK	ACTION AID
Average number of participants	22,5	16	10
Number of trainers per session	2	1	1
Number of as- sistans per session	0	1-2	1



APPENDIX 3

Narratives

Food Heritage Foundation from the garden in Halba:

"During the summer 2019 a school garden was initiated in the region of Miniara a small village situated on the Northern coast of Lebanon, which is still relying on agriculture as a source of income for most of its population. During the Syrian crisis that affected Lebanon, the village received big number of Syrian refugees who established their camps which on rented agricultural lands.

Malaak educational center, which receives Syrian students, was selected to take part in the learning gardens project implemented through a collaboration between Zaher-Grow to Learn and FHF with other partners. The center has already been involved in gardening activities with FHF in addition to establishing a community garden with technical assistance for FHF. Through this project, the garden – that has been abandoned for some time, was rehabilitated and new students participated in the land preparation as well as planting activities.

The workshops relied on the scientific knowledge and expertise of FHF trainers who made sure the students are fully involved and interested. The activities were undertaken through the adoption of a bottom up strategy starting from the basic knowledge of students complemented with the introduction of new technologies and concepts of organic farming and permaculture. This concept was holistic since it shows them the difference between the inherited practices adopted by their parents, relying on the excessive use of chemicals and fertilizers and old irrigation methods, and the new techniques based on the adoption of the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and reasonable fertilization program and the drip irrigation system for water management in a closed system.

The students enjoyed harvesting the green and pesticide-free veggies from their garden that were prepared at the school kitchen into healthy meals. The students also participated in a session on food safety and hygiene in kitchen, mouneh preparation and agro-biodiversity."

Buzurna Juzurna

“The project allows the children to be out of their usual environments and homes, taking some fresh air outside in a safe place and being part of a place which is interesting by its diversity of activities and people. They get to learn about things that are around them all the time (nature, vegetables...) and that they would not necessarily learn about in school.”

Action Aid Baalbek

“Before the project, the participants had no idea how to plant and depend highly on the market to get their vegetables. The project coincided with the crisis in Lebanon and the economical situation is now so bad that most people can’t get their vegetables from the market for the high cost of living. Till now I still get messages from the participants about how much planting their own gardens help them to insure their needs during this crisis. Otherwise, some of their families will have difficulties to get their daily food.”

APPENDIX 4

Pictures

Knowledge sharing and capacity building



Kick-off meeting at Action Aid center in Jib Jineen in May 2019 with all partners



ToT by Jibal in Action Aid center Baalbek for the local trainers, coordinators and volunteers

Malaak educational center in Halba and Food Heirtage Foundation



Monueh workshop



The space transformed into a learning garden



Final celebration and certificates



Teaching in the garden



Practical garden work



Preparing herbs for the school kitchen

Action Aids centers in Baalbek and Jib Jineen, SOILS



Teaching in the terrace garden in Baalbek



Planting seedlings



Classroom teaching



Inspecting for disease and insects



Installing the beds in Jib Jineen



Harvest in Jib Jineen

Buzuruna Juzuruna Organic Farm



Preparing the star shaped garden



Snack break

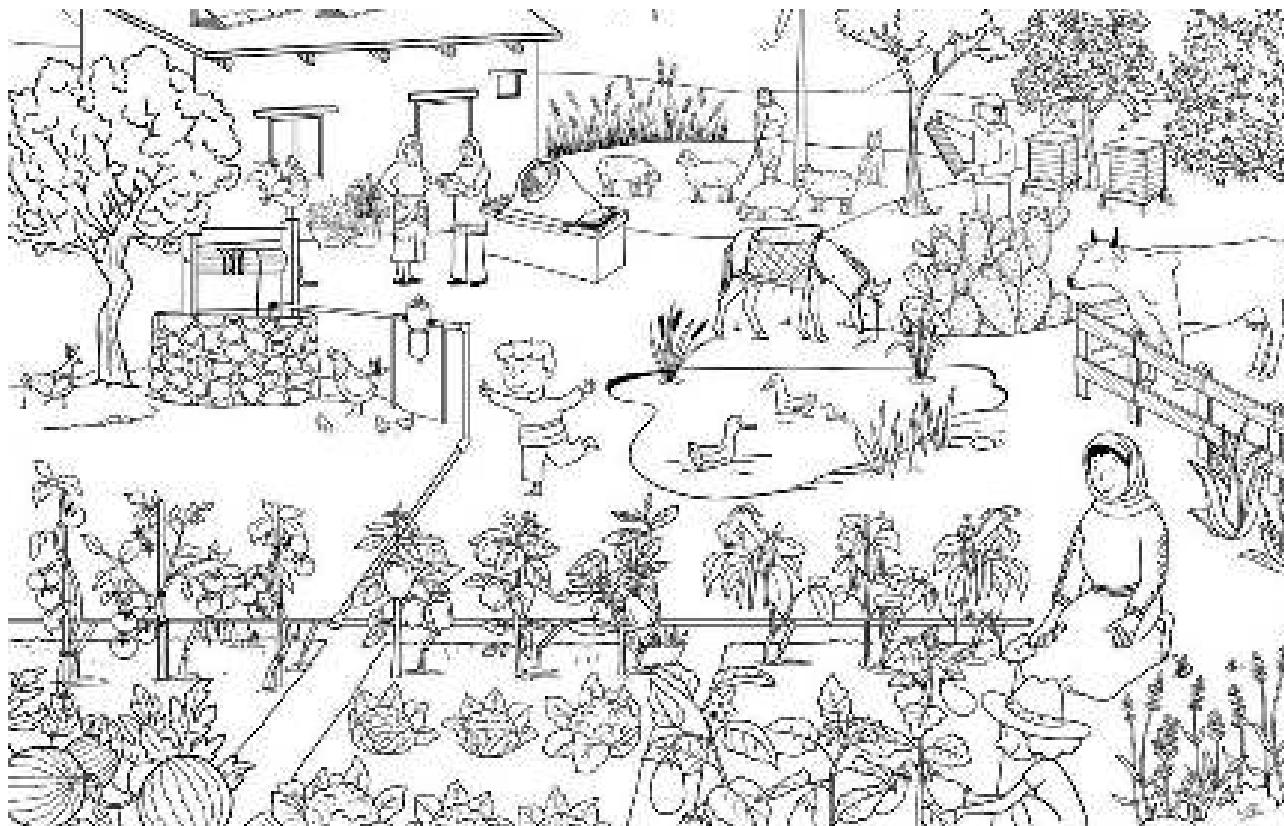


Classroom teaching



The blooming farm around the garden

APPENDIX 5 Material



Poster to colour developed by Buzurna Juzuruna



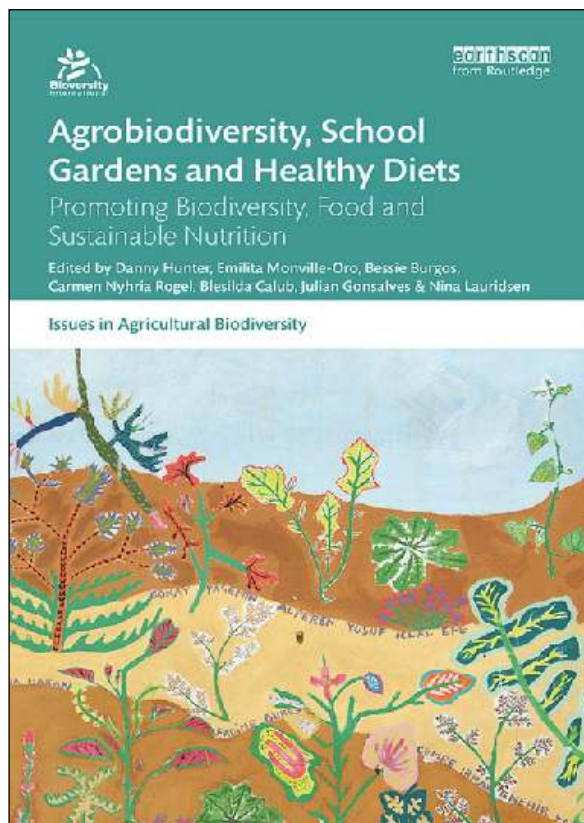
رزمة زراعة الخضار على الساحل

إسم المحصول	موعد الزراعة	بداية النضج
باميا	آذار	أيار
خيار	آذار - نيسان - تموز - آب	أيار - أيلول
الفاصوليا	آذار - نيسان - آب - أيلول	بعد ٤٠ - ٥٠ يوم
بطاطا حلوة	نيسان - أيار	تشرين الأول
حار	نيسان - أيار	تموز
ثوم	آب - أيلول	أيار
سلق	آب - تشرين الثاني	بعد ٤٠ يوم
بهدل	آب - تشرين الثاني	نيسان
لفت	آب - كانون الأول	بعد ٤٠ يوم
قرنبيط	أيلول - تشرين الأول	تشرين الثاني - كانون الأول
كرافس	أيلول - تشرين الأول	كانون الأول
بازلاء	أيلول - تشرين الثاني	تشرين الثاني
فجل	طوال العام	بعد ٣٠ يوم
خس	طوال العام	بعد ٤٠ يوم

Information posters developed by Food Heritage Foundation

APPENDIX 6

Chapter in international book on learning gardens



CASE STUDY 7

GROW TO LEARN – LEARNING GARDENS FOR SYRIAN CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN LEBANON

Nina Lauridsen¹

Background

Nine years into the war in Syria, Lebanon remains at the forefront of one of the largest humanitarian, political, and developmental challenges of our time. The Government of Lebanon estimates that the country hosts 1.5 million of the 6.3 million Syrians who have fled the conflict since 2011. The Syrian refugee population in Lebanon remains the fourth-largest refugee population in the world and the largest concentration of refugees per capita (UNHCR, 2019). As the war and conflicts in Syria continue, an estimated 80% of the refugees lack legal status, leaving them unable to meet survival needs of food, health and shelter as well as being restricted in their access to education and healthcare. The crisis, brought by the war, continues to have an enormous social and economic impact on the host countries, with many local, municipal, and national services such as health, education, and water under severe strain (Halldorsson, 2017; UNHCR, 2019). Despite the support provided and recent improvements in school and training enrolment, displaced Syrians in the region are becoming increasingly vulnerable and more than half of the displaced Syrian children are still out of school (UNHCR, 2019). Efforts are needed in order to increase school enrolments, increase participation in alternative education systems and improve employment opportunities for displaced Syrian youth. On top of this, many of the refugee households, especially in the eastern part of Lebanon in Bekaa Valley, are severely food insecure (Diab El Harake et al., 2018). Children in food insecure households may suffer from nutrient deficiencies, increased illnesses, poor general health, and increased cognitive and behavioural problems that can affect not only their educational attainment but also their economic productivity later in life (Schmeer and Piperata, 2017).

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The project

Since 2016 the Danish NGO, Zaher – Grow to Learn, together with the Lebanese NGOs SOILS – Permaculture Association, Buzuruna Juzuruna, and Food Heritage Foundation, has been working with Syrian communities displaced as refugees in Lebanon. Zaher aims to facilitate a platform where NGOs with expertise in permaculture, organic gardening and in the education of stigmatized Lebanese and Syrians can come together to support and engage marginalized children and youth. A key component to this work is to transform unused patches of land into functioning learning gardens that can accommodate garden education programmes. These programmes contribute to enhancing the environmental, social, and economic sustainability of the communities by promoting the use of organic or permaculture practices. By offering new educational spaces and alternative learning opportunities, they strengthen the education and involvement of the participating children and youth, to develop their knowledge of nature and to increase their livelihood resilience through the learning garden activities. They further ensure preservation of traditional gardening knowledge, increase the availability of and access to healthy food, and promote social cohesion.

Participants attend weekly workshops in the learning gardens, receiving education on subjects related to gardening such as plant life, water, insects, soil, compost, cultivation techniques, and much more. Each workshop consists of a theoretical and practical part. Inside the classroom or underneath the canvas, a local trainer introduces a subject and the theory behind. Afterwards, outside in the garden, the knowledge is put into practice. The lessons taught are rich in principles of permaculture, organic gardening and traditional Middle Eastern agricultural practices. The preparation takes place in the spring, and during the planting season, participants are invited to take part in all steps of creating the gardens: From preparing the soil, planting the seeds, maintaining the crops, and finally harvesting the greens. At the end of each season a harvest celebration takes place together with the participating children and youth. At the celebration, crops from the gardens are harvested and either consumed directly or turned into preserves (Figure C7.1).

One of these learning gardens was established in the backyard of the Baraem El Moustaqbal education centre in Bar Elias, Bekaa Valley. The garden was managed by the local NGO *Sawa for Development and Aid* (SDAID) in collaboration with SOILS. The students, all with Syrian background, created a sustainable blooming garden through a series of six educational workshops that provided both theoretical and practical knowledge about permaculture (Figure C7.2). Starting with the creation of an organic compost station, students designed the garden to grow plants for a variety of purposes, for food as well as for medicinal use and aesthetic reasons. By the end of the workshops, the learning garden boasted evergreens, fruit-bearing trees, and nine vegetable beds with a variety of plants including fava beans, chicory, and beetroot, and flowering perennials such as callistemon, verbena, and night-blooming jasmine. To ensure the continuation of the learning garden, dedicated student leaders were trained to care for the garden after the conclusion of the workshops.



FIGURE C7.1 The theoretical part of the workshop in Sa'dnayel takes place in the outdoor classroom under a tent canvas where the participants and the trainer can seek cover from the sun while exchanging knowledge (2018).

Source: Zaher – Grow to Learn.



FIGURE C7.2 Learning garden pre-workshop for children and youth from the local community in Bar Elias, Bekaa Valley. Placed in groups around tables with pens and papers, the attendees had to draw their hopes and dreams for the upcoming garden, which later came to frame the design for this garden (2016).

Source: Zaher – Grow to Learn.

BOX C7.1: PLANT AND SEED SELECTION

While vegetable seeds and some of the annual flowers for the gardens were sourced from Buzuruna Juzuruna's organic farming school, the perennials, trees and some flowers were sourced from a common nursery. Ghassan al Salman from SOILS Permaculture Association explains about the plant selection for the garden in Bar Elias: 'We tried to give the participants the broader perspective of agriculture, focussing on all the many benefits and synergies of plants and the ecosystems they support. Garden designs are based on what the participants want in their garden. We revised the list of plants, and then removed the incompatible crops, such as bananas (the garden was in a semi-arid climate at an altitude of 1000 m). Many children wanted crops that made them nostalgic of home, such as jasmines, roses, and grapes. We integrated permanent vegetable beds with fruit and trees, as well as some aromatics, flowers, and ornamentals: A willow tree, two poplars and a cypress can serve as a windbreak and bird habitat as well as produce wood. Callistemons, trumpet vines, and jasmines cover concrete surfaces and create a cool microclimate as well as offer shelter and/or forage for small animals and insects. Rose, verbena, and oleaster are good vegetable companions and can be consumed for their medicinal values. The vegetable varieties we planted were peasant varieties for the sake of seed production and garden sustainability'.

In collaboration with the local NGO Buzuruna Juzuruna, Zaher is also facilitating a space for another learning garden at the organization's organic farming school. The local biodynamic farm has dedicated a piece of land to a learning garden for Syrian children from neighbouring refugee camps. Every Friday children are picked up by a bus and taken to the garden that simulates an outdoor classroom. Here children receive education in the various school subjects based on the elements that can be found in the garden to compensate for their inadequate schooling.

The value of learning gardens for stigmatized and displaced children and youth

As the agricultural sector was a source of livelihood for half of the Syrian population before the conflict (Tull, 2017), an additional aim of the learning garden project is to ensure the continuation of traditional agricultural knowledge and practices and thereby improving employment prospects for Syrian youth. Furthermore, it allows the young people to prepare themselves for rebuilding their home country when and if they will be able return. By adding extra-curricular learning opportunities to the daily life, the aim is also to support the student

BOX C7.2: FOOD AID IN LEBANESE REFUGEE CAMPS

Most of the Syrians in Lebanon living in refugee camps rely on food aid programmes to secure their food. E-cards distributed by the World Food Program are one example; these are loaded with money at the end of every month and used to purchase food from contracted shops around the country. Another form of food assistance is provided through community kitchens where Lebanese and Syrian women cook together and hot meals are distributed to families in the camps as well as vulnerable Lebanese families. The kitchens are run by either women cooperatives or local NGOs and are financially supported by international organizations. The Food Heritage Foundation has been involved in upgrading several kitchens and building the capacity of the ladies working there. Nevertheless, inadequate diets are still a huge challenge in the refugee camps with one third being severely or moderately food insecure (UNHCR, UNICEF, and WFP, 2018). The main food groups consumed in the camps are sugar, fats, bread, pasta and dairy while, according to the UN, fruits and vegetables on average are only eaten 2-3 times per week. This explains the high deficiencies especially for iron and vitamin A (ibid.) and emphasizes the importance of increasing the accessibility to fruits and vegetables.

to build their capacities and facilitate new perspectives on their possibilities and self-capabilities. At the same time, engaged children and youth obtain skills that can inspire and enable them to create agricultural spaces in their homes and camps in Lebanon. This is particularly valuable since food is the biggest household expense taking up almost half of the budget for the average refugee household. As the local youth attend the workshops they get to add layers of knowledge to what they already know about gardening, which eventually enable them to become trained learning garden specialists and teachers.

Scaling-up

The project aims to expand its reach to involve more children and youth. Through its activities it will build a strong platform of knowledge that will support local partners to advocate for a learning garden movement in Lebanon. In 2019, the project received a large grant from the Civil Society in Development (CISU) – an association of Danish civil society organizations – to open four new school gardens together with the local partners, Buzuruna Juzuruna, Food Heritage Foundation, Action Aid Arab Region, and Malaak, in collaboration with groups of local stigmatized youth and children – primarily from Syria. With time the aim is to promote learning gardens at Lebanese public schools as well so that Lebanese kids can acquire the same skills as their Syrian counterparts (Figure C7.3).



FIGURE C7.3 The participants and local trainer, Walid, wrapping up a day of hard work in Sa'adanyel after nursing and cultivating their blooming garden (2018).

Source: Zaher – Grow to Learn.

Lessons learned

The success of these projects is solely based on local anchoring. Each garden design and content need to be formed in a close collaboration between the local partners and local participants to ensure that the learning gardens can be of value to the vulnerable communities within the local context. Transparency, good coordination, and consistent communication between the different stakeholders are crucial. Using local trainers and inviting volunteers, parents, teachers, or janitors to be part of the project has contributed to success. This ensures that the projects align with local needs and local sustainability while contributing to community cohesion and a longer life span of the gardens.

The lack of accessible land to be converted into productive gardens as well as the lack of sufficient funding are two very essential challenges that Zaher is facing in the Bekaa Valley. Some of the young adults in the camps are also difficult to engage as their families are highly dependent on the income they get from their daily labour. In addition, displaced families live a very unstable life and are often in a state of limbo without knowing how long they will stay in the same camp. Sometimes they have to leave to move to another camp during the project phase thus disrupting the kids' learning process and connection to the garden.

Note

¹ This text was developed by Nina Lauridsen based on material and inputs from Mabelle Chedid (The Food Heritage Foundation), Ghassan al Salman (SOILS), and the founders of Zaher – Grow to Learn.



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SOILS

PERMACULTURE ASSOCIATION LEBANON

the Food foundation
Heritage

حيال
Jibal

