

Key Features of our Approach

We propose to support municipal governments and Lebanese private universities to institutionalize the inclusion of youth concerns and participation in the local and national decision-making process, through the establishment of democratically-elected Youth Councils and a Lebanese Civic Youth Centre. We will equip young leaders with the skills needed to act effectively in the political process. We will set-up fit-for-purpose public platforms for young female political change-makers so that they inspire their peers.

Our approach builds on the consortium's previous and current successful work in engaging youth and elected officials in their domestic affairs, both on the municipal and national fronts. These include supporting the establishment and operationalisation of Lebanon's first democratically-elected Youth Council in the Federation of Municipalities (FoM) in Jebel el-Sheikh and conducting training for young and talented municipal (council) staff from across Lebanon in soft skills that enabled them to overcome political resistance and contribute to change in their respective organisations.

Key deliverables will be:

- The establishment and operationalisation of four (4) Youth Councils at the FoM level, ensuring sectarian diversity in the choice of geographic scope and supporting gender equality in youth leadership. We will support the organisation of elections for the councils for which all young citizens in the Federations will be able to vote and stand for elections. The councils will have budgets allocated to them and mandates that focus on the improvement of key youth concerns, in order to ensure that Youth Councils are actively engaging youth and gaining credibility and trust. Youth Councils will provide hands-on training on political skills for members and will stimulate thinking and dialogue on domestic issues that reach across confessional party lines.
- The organisation of Political Marketplace sessions at the FoM level on the basis of tried and tested methods and best practice used in the municipal sphere in the Netherlands that will generate opportunities for equal dialogue between elected officials and young citizens. The Political Marketplace will serve as a platform that is not overtly political, and thus will lower the stakes, bringing political dialogue and debate closer to the ordinary person and will provide access to Lebanese youth to engage in political dialogue and debate about key issues of concern.
- The establishment and operationalisation of a youth-run, independent, Lebanese Civic Youth Centre (L-CYC) that polls young Lebanese on priority concerns, informs them on political party positions and MP voting records in a non-partisan manner, and that provides updates on Youth Council, Municipal and Federation Council initiatives. The L-CYC will organise constructive inter-generational 'bridging' sessions between youth leaders, MPs and national political leaders. It will ensure youth ownership over the centre's operations and will inform peers on their generations' concerns, increase transparency, and will support positive dialogue on national domestic political issues.

Selection of geographies for intervention

At the municipal level, we will target Federations of Municipalities, as our working experience in Lebanon points to the fact that municipalities themselves are often too small to realistically expect significant change to occur at a sufficient scale. The second deciding factor is that, FoMs as per their definition, are practical examples of cooperation based on commonly identified priorities, often across confessional boundaries. Thus, they have the scale, capacity, and potential to host Youth Councils and the credibility to organise Political Marketplaces for youth. In deciding which FoMs to target, we have set the following criteria:

(Note: We have currently excluded South Lebanon and Nabatieh from consideration due to the considerable political affiliations to Hizbollah found in nearly all of the Federations in these Governorates. However, we will still be advised by the Authority in this regard).

- **Likelihood of political and community support:** Our existing strong networks and local knowledge of Lebanon will enable us to gauge willingness and buy-in from local political leadership.
- **Confessional diversity:** The confessional context matters, especially because the objective is for youth to engage in politics outside of confessional boundaries. The choice of locations will take into account community diversity in terms of religious affiliation as well as refugee-host community ratios.
- **Political diversity between FoMs:** To maximise the potential for national impact of the programme's municipal initiatives, we envisage attaining support from a majority of political parties also represented in parliament.
- **Political support for gender-sensitive programming:** FoM leadership must be able to provide guarantees that it is willing to strive for equal gender political participation.
- **Potential for linking up with existing relevant initiatives**

Table C Selected target areas for project intervention

Based on the criteria (pending confirmation by the Authority), we recommend four FoMs in three Governorates, North Lebanon, Beqaa' and Mount Lebanon.

Federation of Municipalities of Jabal el-Sheikh (Governorate of Beqaa)

- The leading political party is the Druze-confessional Progressive Socialist Party.
- A Youth Council has been established with DRI currently providing support and elections planned for July 2019 in the next cycle. The Youth Council has an established mandate and an allocated budget.
- Federation leadership has adopted a gender quota of 30-50% as per the Youth Council by-law.

- Trust has been established and support has been received for both VNG International and DRI through our past and current work with the FoM, as confirmed by the Letter of Commitment appended to our proposal and signed by the FoM President.

Federation of Municipalities of Dannieh (Governorate of the North)

- Dannieh is religiously diverse, with significant numbers of Muslims and Christians of all confessions. Thirty-six (36) towns and villages cover most of the population. The Federation is committed to sustainable development, but has the weakest financial and technical capacities in Lebanon. Nonetheless, the FoM has high appetite for capacity building. We have also proposed Dannieh as an FoM in our SWM-R CSSF proposal, which will ensure that there is sufficient political support for our work and will create synergy between the two interventions of designing an inclusive SWM-R project and raising the credibility of the Youth Council, should we be successful in both opportunities.
- Dannieh is led by the Sunni-confessional Future Movement.
- We have the support of the FoM through our past and current work, as confirmed by the Letter of Commitment appended to our proposal, and signed by the FoM President

Federation of Municipalities of Keserwan (Governorate of Mount Lebanon)

- Keserwan is one of the largest FoMs in Lebanon with a total of 54 municipalities.
 - Keserwan-EI Fthouh is almost exclusively Maronite. The President of the Union is affiliated with the Free Patriotic Movement yet won with 52% of the vote against a slate of candidates representing the other political sensitivities in the Christian arena of Lebanon. The Federation is hence an interesting melting pot and a barometer of Christian public opinion.
- The Federation has a dynamic Local Development Office (LDO) staffed exclusively by young women and men under the age of 40, and as such it constitutes an ideal interlocutor for youth. VNG International has a long track-record of working with the Federation and the LDO. Keserwan has agreed to consider its commitment to the programme on the project commencement date.

Federation of Minieh (Governorate of the North)

- The Union of Minieh is a FoM consisting of 5 member municipalities with extensive engagement with local communities, CSOs and youth volunteer groups.
- The FoM is actively cooperating with a number of international donors on issues such as SWM, health, and municipal administration.
- The FoM is closely affiliated with the Future Movement;
- We have established excellent relations and a strong track record of collaboration with the Union of Minieh.

Target Beneficiary Groups in each location

We have identified three different beneficiary groups, based on their interests, positions, and age:

- Youth that are interested in politics, but not currently active in local or national affairs. This includes youth that are active in social movements but are without formal political representation.
- Youth that are actively engaged in local or national political issues. This includes Youth Councillors, members of the L-CYC, Federation Councillors, and active members of political parties.
- Young female political front-runners from Federation and Youth Councils.
- Local & national political leaders that are in a position to influence or determine policies that affect youth. For example, FoM councillors and presidents, MPs, and leading national politicians.

Note: The Lebanese Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS determines the age limit of Youth at 35 and under. Pending confirmation from the Authority, we recommend following the MoYS definition, in order to be able to align with the national Youth Strategy.

Note 2: Local & national political leaders may be categorised as youth themselves, although recent statistics on the previous number of national MPs show 0% of MPs were under 30. Our experiences from the field suggest only a slight improvement at the national level, as confessional and party considerations favour seniority in the selection of MP candidates.

Our Planned Approach: Institutionalising Youth Concerns

A. Youth Councils for immediate change at the municipal level

The Federation of Jebel el-Sheikh has successfully established Lebanon's first democratically-elected Youth Council. The Youth Council is constituted entirely of local youth that are elected by their peers from the Federation. The council can be characterised as having a roughly equal male-female distribution. It has been granted the power to decide and tackle priority issues affecting youth on the basis of the mandate given by the Federation Council and the budget assigned to it. We will build on the Jebel el-Sheikh experience and use it as a best practice model to support the formation of three (3) new FoM Youth Councils. Instrumental to galvanizing immediate support for newly formed Youth Councils is the commitment gained in advance from the Jebel el-Sheikh leadership for this project to act as ambassadors and champions for Youth Councils in the other targeted FoMs.



The first stage of setting-up the Youth Councils will entail convincing FoMs to grant the councils with the required **mandates and operational budgets**. These mandates should at the least establish:

- (1) A democratic process for the selection of candidates.
- (2) Guarantee a gender balance for councillors – but not a confessional balance.
- (3) Transparent deliberation and decision-making procedures, including the appropriate public participation procedures.
- (4) Outline advisory role of Youth Councils in the wider Federation Council structure, and if possible, spell out the decision-making authority of councils over youth issues and policy.

The second stage will support the organisation of **Youth Council elections**. We will train and coach prospective candidates on how to run an issues-based campaign, instead of a confessional one. Issues-based politics will galvanise cross-sectarian support and stimulate cooperation among youth. In this way, young people will be able to demonstrate to society that a new strand of issue-based politics has emerged that reaches beyond traditional sectarian party lines.

Once established and active, Youth Councils will serve several goals. Their democratic mandate will ensure that they are a credible outlet for youth concerns that will have to be taken into consideration by Federation Councils. Furthermore, they will provide politically interested but inactive youth with constructive low-threshold outlets to voice their concerns and with a platform to make their voices heard, respected and considered in the political decision-making process. Youth Councils will also provide unique hands-on opportunities for politically active youth to gain experience in running for office, and then in the execution of the programme on the platform of which they were given the mandate. Youth Councils will incubate the accountable political leaders of tomorrow, inspiring fellow youth to become politically engaged. In essence, the councils constitute grass roots politics at its core.

At the next stage, we will develop and implement **training modules tailored for Youth Councillors**. The modules will focus on leadership and communication skills, democratic principles such as transparency, accountability, gender equality, and civic participation. We will advise Federation Councillors on how to engage positively with their younger peers, ensuring that advice from Youth Councils are properly taken into account when planning for and implementing Federation policies and initiatives.

B. Empowering young female political Change-Makers to create support networks and inspire peers

While gender quotas enshrined in by-laws may be one mechanism to ensure gender balance in Youth Councils, we will also be mindful of two other essential factors contributing to the gender gap: (1) traditional views that prevail to varying extents in all the targeted areas that men are more capable and better suited than women to fulfil political roles or - ironically - are less capable, because they are less conflict-prone and corrupt than men; and (2) the lack of existing support networks between female peers. To test these assumptions and determine specific gender inequalities regarding political participation in the four target areas, we will conduct a **Gender Needs Assessment at the start of the programme**, which has the added benefit of informing gender mainstreaming guidelines for Youth Councils.

We plan to address the issues above by organizing **highly visible public platforms and media events for highly talented and motivated young female Federation and Youth Councillors**, where professional successes, achievements and experiences can be shared. By helping to project their stories and voices, sexist notions of female political leadership will be challenged.



Gender mainstreaming in our programme

To ensure that proposed activities are relevant to the needs and priorities of female youth and are accessible to them, we have included a specific budget line for gender mainstreaming, to be used as a supplement to all project activities. This will include planned costs such as: gender mainstreaming capacity building sessions for local partners, gender mainstreaming guideline pamphlets for Youth Councils and a gender needs assessment conducted in each of our geographic target areas. The budget line will also be used for logistical coordination of events, such as unforeseen extra costs for women to attend in specific geographic regions. For example, the possible need for male accompaniment, using accessible venues and any additional transportation needs.

In concurrence with public events, we will organise quarterly retreats for female change makers. These retreats will be closed sessions that offer conducive and safe environments for female change makers to network with their peers and to grow their social and professional networks. During the retreats, professional facilitators will lead open discussions on the challenges of being a young female in the world of politics and will conduct brainstorming sessions on the steps that can be taken to reduce the barriers to female political participation in their respective constituencies. Lastly, we will embed capacity building and training on democratic reform and women's representation in local and national politics in the retreats.

C. The Political Marketplace for an open and accessible exchange of ideas

Concurrently with supporting the newly established Youth Councils, we will organise joint **Political Marketplace events with FoMs on a monthly basis**. The Political Marketplace sessions have been adopted and taken from successful models of Dutch Municipal practice. The Market is a dialogue session that is held in a public place and in a market stall, convening municipal councillors and decision-makers that engage citizens in an informal and level manner. This way ideas on policy and implementation are exchanged in more

Keeping the dialogue alive: The Political Marketplace in The Netherlands

The city of Almere (population 200.000) holds their Political Marketplace every Thursday at municipal hall at seven o'clock in the evening. Citizens are free to walk in. At informal roundtables, councillors listen to concerns and discuss recent policies and proposals with citizens. All sessions are livestreamed on the municipal website.

constructive ways than in traditional and formal Q/A sessions, which run the risk of quickly becoming ceremonial back-and-forths between defending councillors and citizens on the offensive.

The **Political Marketplace is also a digital space**. As pioneered by the Jebel el-Sheikh Youth Council, news on local youth issues can easily be disseminated with high visibility through publicly accessible social media pages. Additionally, these pages can also facilitate platforms for dialogue and exchange for youth closely following FoM and Youth Council affairs. We will support the establishment and maintenance of these social media platforms.

D. Establishing a Lebanese Civic Youth Centre & digital platform for the activation of national youth engagement.

We will set-up a **National Youth Engagement Platform website** that will track the latest news, national debates and decisions arising from local Youth Councils, as well as the policy positions of various MPs and political parties. To avoid the web portal from relying on support from external parties, and to establish its credibility as a youth-driven platform, we will also set-up a **Lebanese Civic Youth Centre (L-CYC)** (in line with the MoYS strategy of 2012's objective of building active institutions that advocate on behalf of youth) to manage the web portal. The L-CYC will be run by young politically engaged volunteers and an L-CYC Coordinator. It will oversee and maintain the website. Furthermore, the L-CYC will organise townhall sessions, debates and other events for local youth leaders, and will convene Youth Council members, MPs and national political leaders. The L-CYC will become a bridging instrument through its activities and operation of the website and will help to spearhead both a local and national youth reform agenda.

We will seek partnerships with a private university in Lebanon so as to embed the L-CYC in its structure and ensure sustainability of the centre. A private university will be selected since public universities have suspended all activities related to politics. A university offers both a neutral and trusted alternative to the politicised and Hezbollah-led MoYS and a **direct link to young, talented students and graduates that can become active L-CYC members and ambassadors**.

Ensuring linkages with donor programming

Our proposed programme complements several ongoing and upcoming activities that are financed/supported by a variety of donor organisations, such as the FCO, EU, UNDP and USAID. We have existing strong relations with a diverse network of stakeholders and donor organisations across Lebanon. During the six-week inception phase of the project we will reach out to relevant stakeholders and organise meetings with implementers, ensuring the project takes full advantage of opportunities for cooperation and linkage.

The selected FoMs and geographies of intervention have been informed by surveying ongoing initiatives to avoid duplication. We will continue to do this by ensuring regular exchange and close coordination with relevant actions including the CSSF Lots Female Political Participation and Strengthening Democratic Mechanism for Accountability and Dialogue, and relevant initiatives, the most notable being:

- UK Aid/ UK: 'Active Citizens' is a social leadership training programme that promotes intercultural dialogue and community-led social development. The programme has been running since 2010 and has trained over 5000 participants in different areas of the country including Sidon, Tyre, Nabatieh, Beqaa, Hermel, Akkar, Chouf, Tripoli and Beirut. Gaining insight on the British Council's national needs assessments in relation to community cohesion and women empowerment will be particularly relevant to share relevant knowledge of our targeted geographic areas.
- USAID/US: The Lebanon Enterprise Development (LED) is a three-year project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) that aims to develop Lebanese enterprises and increase jobs for Lebanese citizens. Through LED's activities and impact, USAID aims to advance socioeconomic development, empower youth and women, and spur economic growth and stability. Through enhancing youth unemployment rates, increased economic choices for young people can enhance political participation. Targeted communications for these beneficiaries would be particularly valuable for our project's awareness raising campaign.

EU: Implemented by the British Council and in collaboration with the American University of Beirut, the EU funded a 24-month project providing technical assistance to support youth development in Lebanon. The overall objective of the project was to strengthen the enabling environment for the implementation of the National Youth Policy and youth development in Lebanon, in addition to enhancing the roles of the MoYS and the Youth Forum. Exchanging approaches and possible synergies with the British Council on their promotion of the National Youth Policy will be particularly relevant for the set-up of the National Youth Engagement Platform website, in addition to their collaboration with the American University of Beirut.

Visibility: communication and dissemination

To ensure country-wide visibility and disseminate the key messages developed throughout the project, we will mobilise a communications expert to design and implement an awareness-raising and policy advocacy campaign that ensures gender-sensitive communications throughout the campaign. Key activities are:

- Support in identifying the key messages and objectives of the campaign.
- Development of a communications strategy and guidelines for media and social media tools (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube etc.), incl. online and offline advertising.
- Development of a story-telling communications plan in line with the project's key messages and SMART indicators that will be used to measure the success of the campaign. This will include executing audio-visual outputs (e.g. infographics, GIFs, posters, brochures, blog, testimonies, videos of street interviews, success stories, for example: of neighbourhood initiatives and municipal initiatives) that frame the youth's discourse and propel political action.
- Set up of a social media monitoring platform and formulation of social media analytical reports.
- Support in boosting the project's media visibility.