THE CROSS-POLITICAL NETWORK IN LEBANON
Impact Study of the Cross-Political Network in Lebanon

Prepared by Als Research
for DUF – Danish Youth Council

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1. PREFACE

This report presents the findings of the impact study of the Danish Youth Council’s Cross-Political Network in Lebanon – a cross-political network between Danish political youth organisations and Lebanese political youth wings. The network was initiated by Danish and Lebanese youth organisations and facilitated by DUF from 2005 to 2014.

The impact study is based on a mixed methods research design combining qualitative and quantitative methods. 20 interviews have been carried out among former Lebanese and Danish participants in the network in order to explore the experienced effects of the network. In addition to the interviews, a quantitative survey was conducted to examine the proliferation of these experienced effects among a broader segment of the former network participants.

Als Research would like to thank all informants who participated in the study, including the former project holders and the former participants from Lebanese and Danish political youth organisations, who took part in interviews and/or completed the survey. Without your active participation and valuable contributions, this impact study would not have been possible.

Also, we would like to thank the Lebanese participants for kindly welcoming us in Beirut, and being very helpful in the process of completing the interviews.

Chief Consultant Bjarke Følner and Intern, MSc in Political Science, Mette Lybker carried out the impact study between September 2016 and January 2017.

The responsibility for all conclusions drawn from the data lies entirely with Als Research.

Copenhagen, January 2017
2. BACKGROUND, OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 About DUF and the cross-political network in Lebanon

The purpose of the Danish Youth Council (DUF) is to be a common representative of organised democratic youth work in Denmark. DUF was founded as a non-governmental organisation in 1940 by democratic youth associations. The purpose was to protect and develop democratic values and to enhance a democratic culture among Danish youth.

Until this day the focus of DUF’s activities remains the strengthening of democratic values and of the democratic participation of youth in society. Through its activities, DUF creates forums where young people can meet and actively engage in democracy, society and organisations at local, national and international levels.

Since 2005, DUF has facilitated multi-party dialogue and cross-political cooperation between Danish, Lebanese and Egyptian political youth organisations. The first cross-political network in Lebanon, which is in focus here, was established in 2005 as a formal cooperation between Danish political youth organisations and Lebanese youth wings. Due to spillover effects from the civil war in Syria, the network was put on hold in 2014.

The purpose of the cross-political network in Lebanon was to promote dialogue and cooperation across the political spectrum in and between Lebanon and Denmark, and to strengthen a democratic culture in the political sphere. In Lebanon the political landscape is very polarized, often at the expense of solving concrete political challenges for the benefit of the broader public. Thus, in 2005, DUF conjointly with young politicians from Denmark and Lebanon identified a need for young politicians from political youth organisations to meet on a common platform, with focus on cross-political dialogue, negotiation and consensus seeking. Through this platform the youth could evolve, be inspired and cooperate across political and cultural divides.

Another purpose of the cross-political networks was to strengthen young people’s participation in formal decision making, since young people in many MENA countries are absent from formal decision making forums.

2.2 Main phases in the cross-political network in Lebanon

Participants from youth wings of approximately 11-12 Lebanese political parties and approximately 6-7 Danish political youth organisations took part in the cross-political network in Lebanon. Each year a total of approximately 30 participants took part in the network (2 representatives from each youth organisation). The Lebanese representatives came from a broad spectrum of political youth organisations including organisations affiliated with the March 8 Alliance and organisations affiliated with the March 14 Alliance – the two major coalitions in Lebanese politics since March 2005. During the project period 2005-2014 the Danish-Lebanese cooperation evolved significantly and underwent a number of changes. Below we present what is considered the three main phases of the project.
The first phase: Creating a platform of cross-political relations and trust (2005-2006)
In the earliest part of the project period, the main focus was to bring all the participants together for social and political activities on neutral ground. According to DUF, this focus was deemed necessary to facilitate initial relation building and increase cross-political trust among the participants from Lebanon in order to slowly open up the dialogue. The early period was also marked by the exclusion of representatives from Hezbollah and consequently by the discussions, which this prompted.

The second phase: Cooperation on common political activities (2007-2011)
In the second period, from approximately 2007 to 2011, the project moved on to developing and creating consensus around common political activities with cross-political support, such as a campaign to lower the voting age in Lebanon from 21 to 18 years. This was supported by seminar activities focused on competence building in advocacy and campaigning.

The third phase: Action groups (2012-2014)
From 2012 a new concept was introduced, which focused on creating a number of cross-political action groups within the network. Each group was to decide on its own cross-political cause and activities, including group meetings etc. This meant that the Lebanese participants not only participated in the common meetings for the entire network – which were held twice a year – but also met independently and more often with the other members of their cross-political action group(s) in Lebanon.

In 2014, the network was put on hold due to the civil war in Syria and its spillover effects in Lebanon. In particular, the situation in Syria led to tensions between members of the youth organisation affiliated with the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party (SSNP) and other members of the network. As a result, DUF decided to discontinue the Danish-Lebanese cooperation in June 2014.

2.3 Objectives of the impact study

The overall objective of the impact study is to track and document the experienced effects of the cross-political cooperation between young politicians and political youth organisations in Denmark and Lebanon.

This includes:

- Identifying results of cross-political dialogue and cooperation among young politicians and political youth organisations in Lebanon and Denmark. The study examines the capacity building of young politicians and the expected transfer from individual to organisational learning and institutionalization in the political parties. Furthermore, the study examines the impact of the network in relation to dialogue and networking across political and sectarian divides in difficult contexts as well as the impact on the political culture in the youth organisations.

- Exploring DUF’s comparative advantages in terms of working with political youth organisations and networks based on the case of the Danish-Lebanese cooperation.
• Examining best practice in terms of methodology used in Lebanon.

• Summing up key findings, which can outline the basis of potential for new DUF-supported and coordinated networks.

2.4 Study design and methodology

The following section details the research design of the impact study as well as a number of methodological considerations, which should be highlighted.

The impact study is based on a mixed methods research design, combining qualitative interviews, a quantitative survey and desk research of relevant background materials. The conclusions and recommendations of the impact study rely exclusively upon the experienced impact of the network among former network participants. While the results presented here focus on emphasizing those types of positive effects, which are noted by various informants and indicated by a majority of the respondents in the survey across party lines and allegiances, it should be noted that frequency of experienced effects does not correspond to evidence of impact in a strict sense of the term.

According to the objectives formulated by DUF, the impact study should explore DUF’s comparative advantages in terms of working with political youth organisations and networks based on the case of the Danish-Lebanese cooperation. As the study focuses solely on the cross-political network in Lebanon it is not possible to make direct comparisons between DUF and other project holders in the field. We do, however, give some examples of the informants’ opinions on possible advantages of DUF’s approach and methods compared to the informants’ experiences of the approaches and methods used in other projects they have participated in.

As the collection of data was carried out in October and November 2016 – between 2 and 11 years after the participants took part in the network from 2005-2014 – the time gap increases the risk that some participants may have forgotten details or aspects of their participation in the network. Conversely, the time passing since the project took place allows us to capture not only short-term, but also some long-term experienced effects occurring after the participants left the network.

The interviews among former participants (20 interviews)

In total, 20 interviews were carried with former participants from Lebanon and Denmark. The interviews took place in October and November 2016 with an average length of 1 hour per interview. Informants were selected in cooperation with DUF and DUF helped to plan and set-up the interviews in Lebanon. The informants were selected to represent a cross-section of former participants from the different phases of the project and from as many different youth organisations as possible. Below is a more detailed description of the interviews carried out in Denmark and Lebanon:
• Interviews with former Danish participants
A total of 8 interviews were carried out among 8 former Danish network participants from the youth organisations Dansk Socialdemokratisk Ungdom (DSU), Venstres Ungdom (VU), Radikal Ungdom (RU), Frit Forum and Liberal Alliances Ungdom (LAU). 4 female and 4 male participants were interviewed. The interviews were conducted face-to-face (7 interviews) or by telephone (1 interview).

• Interviews with former Lebanese participants
A total of 12 interviews were conducted among 13 former network participants from Lebanon. The former network participants came from a broad spectrum of Lebanese politics, including the Future Movement, Kataeb Youth, El Marada, Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party (SSNP), Tajoddod Youth, Democratic Left, Lebanese Forces, Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), A.R.F. Zavarian Student Association and the National Liberal Party (NLP). 4 female and 9 male participants were interviewed. All 12 interviews were conducted face-to-face and at various locations in Beirut.

The survey among former participants (50 respondents)
The websurvey was carried out in November 2016. A total of 50 respondents completed the survey (47 complete answers). The survey was distributed to more than 200 former participants of the cross-political network, with DUF providing Als Research with e-mail addresses of the respondents. The relatively low survey completion rate must be viewed in light of the fact that the survey was carried out between 2 and 11 years after the participants took part in the network. As a consequence, a sizeable number of the provided emails were no longer in use. Even so, the survey supplements the data from the interviews and makes it possible to shed light on the experienced effects among a broader segment of the former Lebanese and Danish participants.

Desk studies and background interviews with former project holders
As a supplement to the interviews and the survey, Als Research carried out desk studies of relevant materials as well as background interviews with two of the former project holders: Gunvor Bjerglund Thomsen and Helle Q. Joensen. The background interviews and the desk studies served to give an overview and an understanding of the project, the project goals, the content of seminars as well as focal points in the cooperation, thus aiding and qualifying the development of the interview guides and the survey questions.

2.5 The structure of the report
Chapter 3 provides a summary of the key findings, conclusions and recommendations of the impact study. The following three chapters present the findings in more detail and specifically in relation to DUF’s approach and role as facilitator (Chapter 4); individual-level outcomes (Chapter 5); organisational-level outcomes (Chapter 6) and future perspectives (Chapter 7).
Impact Study of the Cross-Political Network in Lebanon

Photos from the cross-political network seminar in Denmark, 2014.
3. KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Key findings

In relation to **DUF’s overall approach and role as facilitator**, a vast majority of the respondents and informants in this study believe that:

- DUF did well to create a neutral meeting ground and a valuable platform for dialogue across political and national differences.

- The timing of the early project intervention in 2005-2006 was very important inasmuch as the cross-political platform for dialogue created by DUF helped to establish lines of communication and personal relations across the different youth organisations in Lebanon at a time of great political instability.

- DUF succeeded in acting as a legitimate and neutral facilitator of the network and did well to establish a platform based on an equal relationship between DUF and the various participants.

*For more details on DUF’s approach and role as facilitator, see chapter 4.*

In relation to **individual-level outcomes**, the impact study finds that:

- Nearly all respondents agree that they have gained personal competencies through their participation in the network, and that the network has strengthened their personal relations to participants in other parties. Further, their participation has increased their understanding of the political culture in the other country and increased their understanding of how to use dialogue to bridge political divides.

- A majority of the Lebanese respondents believe they improved their communication and advocacy skills, while approximately half of them believe they improved their cooperation, negotiation and facilitation skills by taking part in the network.

- There are some noticeable differences between the answers of the Danish and the Lebanese respondents in relation to specific skills. A clear majority of the Danish respondents believe they improved their project management skills (73 per cent) and their cooperation skills (86 per cent) compared to 42 and 54 per cent of the Lebanese respondents. Equally, 32 per cent of the Danes believe they improved their skills in relation to making presentations, compared to just 13 per cent of the Lebanese.

- Conversely, higher percentages among the Lebanese believe they improved their skills in relation to advocacy, negotiation and campaigning by taking part in the network.
• The use of tangible democratic methods and procedures inside the network – such as secret ballot voting – was an important learning experience for many Lebanese.

• The levels of activity and motivation varied to a great extent among the Lebanese participants, and the individual-level impact in terms of improved skills was rather limited among the least active and least motivated. Among the majority of more motivated and active participants, however, the overall picture is still very positive in relation to the individual-level outcomes.

• The results from the survey as well as the interviews indicate that most of the different types of activities in the network seem to have had a positive impact at the individual level.

• Most of the respondents who took part in action groups indicate that this was among the beneficial activities in relation to their individual learning. However, informants from both countries also agree that it was sometimes very difficult to find common political ground, and that they sometimes grew tired of each other due to different expectations and different understandings of the possible and realistic outcomes of the action groups in relation to making real political change.

_for more details on the individual-level outcomes of the network, see chapter 5._

In relation to _organisational-level outcomes_, the impact study finds that:

• A clear majority of the respondents – from both countries – believe that the content of the DUF network was relevant for their youth organisation, thus proving DUF capable of demonstrating the relevance of the chosen skills and tools to members of very different youth organisations in both countries.

• When asked to identify the most relevant activities in relation to organisational-level outcomes, the Lebanese participants give varying answers. Some point to particular tools and dialogue exercises, while others emphasize the general inspiration from learning about the organisation of the Danish youth parties and the relationship between the youth organisations and the mother parties in Denmark. Several informants specifically highlight that the DUF tools were relatively simple to use and to remember, which made them useful in the informants’ subsequent work in their own organisation and relatively easy to pass on to other members. In the survey, 61 per cent of the Lebanese respondents say that they used the tools in their organisation, while 43 per cent indicate that they passed them on to other members.

• 67 per cent of the Lebanese respondents believe the DUF network contributed to more youth empowerment in their organisation, while 42 per cent believe the DUF network led to some democratic changes or reforms in their youth organisation.

• The Lebanese informants, who emphasize the impact of the network in relation to more youth empowerment in their youth organisation, typically focus on positive
changes in relation to their organisations’ overall approach to practising youth politics rather than changes at a deeper structural level.

- Most Lebanese informants agree that the DUF network directly inspired positive organisational-level changes in 4-5 different youth organisations. The examples cover various types of changes, but it is a common pattern that the changes were most often implemented by individuals, who were quite active in the DUF network, participated in a bilateral partnership with a Danish youth party and succeeded in maintaining or achieving a position of political influence in their youth organisation.

- While some examples refer to formal democratic changes (i.e. the introduction of internal elections as seen in one organisation), most of the changes are more adequately described as changes in the democratic/dialogical culture inside the organisation.

- Long-term participation in the network seems to have been a prerequisite for organisational-level changes. The continuous influx of inspiration brought back to the organisation from participants in the DUF network thus helped to strengthen and anchor the change over time in the 4-5 organisations mentioned above.

- The DUF network also helped to inspire change in relation to the *external* dialogue between the youth organisations in Lebanon as well as in relation to increased participation in international networks in general.

- Several Danish informants emphasize that the Danish youth parties strengthened their organisations in relation to international projects in the Middle East and greatly improved their knowledge and network in the region as a derived result of their participation in the DUF network. As with the Lebanese youth organisations, however, it is also clear that the positive changes have only taken place in some of the Danish youth parties.

- Some former participants have actively used their learning from the DUF network in their subsequent political careers or in other influential positions in society. In this sense, the DUF network has also contributed more broadly to the nature and development of the political scene in Lebanon as well as in Denmark – and former participants may continue to do so in the coming years, as they move forward in their careers.

*For more details on the organisational-level outcomes of the network, see chapter 6.*
3.1 Recommendations

The informants in this impact study have shared various ideas for improving the cross-political network concept used in the Danish-Lebanese network between 2005 and 2014. The main ideas for possible improvement put forward by the informants are:

- **Improve the recruitment procedures**
  While the bottom-up approach to change is an important part of DUF’s cross-political network concept, it is nonetheless important to recruit active, talented and up-and-coming youth politicians rather than “foot-soldiers”. Thus, the participants should not be recruited from the very bottom of the youth organisations, but rather from the “middle layer” in order to maximise the possible impact of future networks.

- **Adjust the balance between processes and results**
  DUF may benefit by focusing more on the process and the learning perspectives of the cross-political cooperation than on achieving political end-goals. Perhaps the timeframe for cooperation activities could be shorter or the end-goals more easily achievable in order to ensure that participants are encouraged by the achievement of small successes rather than potentially disappointed by failed larger-scale ambitions. In relation to the organisational-level outcomes DUF may also include more support and advice on how to implement changes at the organisational level and how to be an effective agent-of-change.

- **Deal with the inclusion/exclusion mechanisms**
  DUF should consider stating rules for inclusion and exclusion of youth organisations in future networks more clearly and explicitly. While DUF should strive for the broadest possible representation of youth organisations in participating network countries, advancing cross-political network activities in countries or settings where it is not possible to include representatives from all youth organisations it is nonetheless perceived as legitimate and worthwhile.

- **Reconsider the role of the external coordinator**
  The Lebanese coordinators played an important role in the network but sometimes struggled to find the necessary time and energy to carry out their tasks, as they were working on a voluntary basis. In relation to possible future networks DUF should therefore reconsider the role and the profile of the coordinators in the partnering country. Possible solutions could be the creation of a paid a part-time position and/or the recruitment of a non-partisan coordinator from outside the network.

- **Consider perspectives for future international DUF projects**
  The overall cross-political network concept is certainly not only relevant in relation to partnering countries in the MENA region. Given the results of this impact study, DUF may consider possible future cross-political networks in other regions and with other partnering countries as well.

For more details on recommendations and future perspectives, see chapter 7.
Photos from the cross-political network seminar in Denmark, 2014.
4. DUF’S APPROACH AND ROLE AS FACILITATOR

This chapter deals with the experiences of the former participants in the cross-political network in relation to the overall impact of DUF’s approach and facilitation of the network.

In general, the former participants are very positive in their assessment of DUF’s general project approach in the CPN-project. The informants typically highlight that DUF did well to create a neutral meeting ground and a valuable platform for dialogue across political and national differences.

As shown in Table 4.1 below, a vast majority of the respondents in the survey share these sentiments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.1: The approach</th>
<th>Agree or strongly agree (Lebanese respondents)</th>
<th>Agree or strongly agree (Danish respondents)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The way DUF brought us together…</td>
<td>96 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made it possible for young politicians from different political organisations to meet on neutral ground</td>
<td>96 %</td>
<td>96 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Created a valuable platform for intercultural dialogue across different nationalities</td>
<td>87 %</td>
<td>96 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Created a valuable platform for dialogue across political differences</td>
<td>87 %</td>
<td>96 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More specifically, the informants – and especially the Lebanese informants – underline the importance of the timing of the early project intervention in the period around 2005 and 2006, when tensions in Lebanese politics were running high after the assassination of Rafiq Hariri and the 2006 war with Israel. One informant describes the importance in this way:

“In Lebanon, at that time we had a lot of problems between all the Lebanese parties. The step that the Danes took was really great because in Lebanon it was difficult for the youth to sit together and discuss and there was no focus on youth involvement. At that time sitting with lets say the Lebanese Forces and the Future Movement, it was something very abnormal for us. So it was a good result that we were able to sit together – a lot of the time we were not able to agree on anything – but at least we were able to discuss, and after discussing I can say, I have a friend in Future Movement and other parties. This was very important for us!” (Lebanese participant)
Also informants who took part in later periods of the project underline the importance of the general ‘platform for dialogue’-approach in relation to the Lebanese participants. Here are some examples:

“The role DUF has taken in making the different parties in Lebanon cooperate is a major step. This is especially important among the youth, as they will play a big role in the future society”
(Lebanese participant)

“When working in the DUF network the alliances came out of force - we were working together. And only through DUF did we have relations with some of the political parties”
(Lebanese participant)

“It was felt in the network that Lebanese politics are very sectarian. There were many hidden barriers and a lack of tradition for political cooperation among the Lebanese. But luckily we could also feel a will to try and cooperate within the boundaries of the network. So the network gave the opportunity to bring people together, who were not able to talk to each other before – and many still have contact today. So to bring the Lebanese together across the many divisions made a big difference – and also to bring in Danes to take part in the dialogue. It also made an impact, that we could learn about the traditions and politics in the other country and that the Lebanese could hear about our way of cooperating. So it is rather unique, what the network has done.” (Danish participant)

“To be part of the DUF (network) was a great experience, that helped us in the dialogue with other Lebanese parties. This dialogue was very important” (Lebanese participant)

“Before, Lebanese youth politicians were a disaster – there was a lot of conflict. So the process was important – that the Lebanese worked together” (Lebanese participant)

The majority of the informants are equally positive in their overall evaluation of DUF’s role as the facilitator of the cross-political and cross-national dialogue. With a few exceptions, most informants agree that DUF succeeded in acting as a neutral facilitator and created a platform based on an equal relationship between DUF and the different participants. Here are two examples:

“I think DUF excelled in their role as a neutral facilitator. They withdrew a lot instead of taking a paternalistic approach, and they were really good at communicating that there should be room for everyone to share their opinion – whether you agree with them or not. Sometimes it was a little too much ‘post-it on the wall’ and ‘what is your dream?’ – but overall, DUF did really well” (Danish participant)

“In the DUF we had a friendly communication with the other parties and facilitators. This was something very good about the DUF. Disagreements were perceived as different perspectives” (Lebanese participant)
As seen in Table 4.2 above, the majority of both the Lebanese and the Danish respondents in the survey agree that DUF did well as a neutral facilitator and that DUF’s methods were very beneficial for the network.

More specifically, several informants highlight that DUF’s focus on including and empowering the individual participants and motivating them to take part in the development of the activities in order to create individual ownership was important. Here is a typical statement:

“It was special because we prepared the workshops all together – it was not only DUF preparing the workshops and the programme. So we felt responsible for the workshop” (Lebanese participant)

Several of the Lebanese informants also mention that DUF succeeded in recruiting a relatively high number of female participants from the Lebanese youth organisations, although the majority of the Lebanese participants were men. According to one of the Lebanese informants, who participated in a number of different international projects, “there were more women participating in DUF than in other international projects”.

Several informants also highlight the importance of the seminars in Denmark – and most believe that preference should be given to venues with peaceful surroundings outside Copenhagen in order to create a conducive environment without too many possible distractions:

“It was important that it took place in Denmark, because then we were not connected to Lebanon. We could talk, walk around in nature, and talk about things that did not escalate. There was no shouting at each other. We were disconnected” (Lebanese participant)

“When the Danes were there, we had to be polite and civilised in front of the foreigners. So we did not shout because of our Danish friends. So the foreign component enhanced the dialogue. This helped us rethink how to discuss” (Lebanese participant)
When it comes to the development of the project in the time between the beginning in 2005 and the end of the network in 2014, the informants do not agree fully in relation to their assessment of which type of activities produced the most positive impact. But it seems that most of the different activities in all 3 phases fitted well with the objectives of the network. A majority of respondents – from each of the three different phases – thus agree that DUF did well as a facilitator and that DUF’s methods were very beneficial for the network. As described above, however, the positive impact in relation to improved cross-political dialogue between members of different Lebanese organisations was especially great in the early years.

Finally, it is worth noting that some Danish informants believe that DUF should have been more goal-oriented and that DUF should have articulated the goals and objectives of the network more explicitly – whereas most of the Lebanese informants believe that DUF’s “open approach” and the absence of a “too visible agenda” reinforced the legitimacy of the network and was helpful in building the necessary cross-national trust and the platform for the Lebanese-Danish dialogue.

It speaks in favour of the “open approach”, that a clear majority of the respondents – across both countries and across (very) different political youth organisations – believe that DUF struck a fine balance and worked well as a legitimate and neutral facilitator. One of the Lebanese participants describes her perception of the advantages of the DUF approach in this way:

“There was a method of work that was efficient. An environment of work that was efficient, and I think it was a healthy environment to discuss in. For example, we did a lot games with the DUF that helped a lot. I think it is more about the method than the reasons of why you’re here and what you’re doing. So the neutral ground and the DUF approach helped... There was not so much a single goal or objective – but this was good this way. It is dangerous to have too much of an agenda. Also it made us able to decide, what we wanted to work on – ownership! That way, the agenda became more flexible. It is important not to feel that: ‘Oh, the DUF are coming because they want to make us democratic’. It just doesn’t work that way! When the story is that we are learning from each other, the whole setting is friendlier and we come up with what we want to work on.” (Lebanese participant)

As witnessed in this chapter, the majority of the informants and respondents are generally very positive in their assessment of DUF’s overall approach and facilitation skills. Some former participants, however, also voice relevant and important points of constructive criticism and ideas for improvements, which may be relevant for DUF to consider in relation to possible cross-political network initiatives for the future. These ideas and suggestions are detailed and discussed in chapter 7: Future perspectives. First, the next two chapters describe the perceived impact and the outcomes of the project on the individual level (chapter 5) and the organisational level (chapter 6).
5. INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL OUTCOMES

This chapter describes the perceived impact of the cross-political network in relation to the individual participants' learning and the development of individual skills and competencies. While the main focus in this chapter is on individual-level outcomes among the former Lebanese participants, the chapter also touches upon the individual-level outcomes among the former Danish participants.

The majority of the informants – from both countries and across the political spectrum – believe that their participation in the network has been very beneficial and rewarding in relation to their personal learning and the development of their personal skills and competencies.

5.1 Overall personal gains

As illustrated in Table 5.1, nearly all respondents in the survey agree that they have gained personal competencies through their participation in the network, and that the network has strengthened their personal relations to participants in other parties; increased their understanding of the political culture in the other country, and increased their understanding of how to use dialogue to bridge political divides:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.1</th>
<th>Agree or strongly agree (Lebanese)</th>
<th>Agree or strongly agree (Danish)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(By) participating in the DUF network...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased my understanding of the political culture in the other country</td>
<td>96 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i.e. Lebanon or Denmark)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I got better relations to participants from other parties</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>91 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I gained personal competencies</td>
<td>96 %</td>
<td>91 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g. within negotiation, advocacy, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I gained a better understanding of how to use dialogue to bridge political</td>
<td>91 %</td>
<td>83 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>divides</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed my perception of politics</td>
<td>43 %</td>
<td>57 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is a remarkably positive result that all of the Lebanese respondents (100 per cent) indicate that the network has improved their personal relations to participants from other parties and that 91 per cent of them increased their understanding of how to use dialogue to bridge political divides, as these have been among the central social impact objectives of the network.

Similarly, the informants typically highlight the importance of the increased understanding of the political culture in the other country that they have gained from the network. Among the Lebanese informants, many say that it was inspiring for them to learn about the relationship between the youth- and mother parties in Denmark, about Danish social policies and the welfare state, about the ideological foundations of the Danish parties and about the practice of “day-to-day” politics in Denmark. Here are some exemplifying quotes:

“The Danish welfare system was inspiring” (Lebanese participant)

“We gained a lot from the element that the communication was with foreigners. We had a big exposure to the Danish culture and the Danish way of life” (Lebanese participant)

“The youth political branches in Lebanon just followed the political leaders and the senior members, which is different to how it works in Denmark. It was interesting to learn that the Danish youth parties could disagree with their mother parties” (Lebanese participant)

“I think a lot has happened on the individual level for the Lebanese. Many among the Lebanese didn’t really know what it means to be a liberal, a socialist or a ‘social-liberal’ – since this was something they had often only been told from senior members in parties, which are based on religious affiliation or family ties more than on ideology. So they learned about the different ideological positions of the Danish parties and the nature of Danish politics. And I think this has certainly advanced their political skills. I also think they learned a lot about the political and democratic advantages of cross-political cooperation” (Danish participant)

Among the Danish informants, many also highlight the importance of the increased understanding of the political culture in Lebanon and in the Middle East that they gained from their participation in the network. Here are some examples:

“I got a particular insight into Lebanon, and a better understanding of people living in a very different reality, which is something that I feel I have been able to use a lot afterwards” (Danish participant)

“For me and the other Danish participants the network has been an eye-opener in relation to politics and dynamics in Lebanon and in the Middle East. Before the network, most of us knew very little about the political culture and the history of the Middle East” (Danish participant)

Some informants believe that their participation in the network has led them to change their overall perception of politics. As seen in figure 5.1, this opinion is shared by 43 per cent of the former Lebanese participants and 57 per cent of the former Danish participants.

More specifically, several of the informants – from both countries – believe that by learning
about the nature of the political culture in the other country they have also gained a new perspective on the nature of doing politics in their own country – and in some instances they have changed their views in relation to certain domestic or foreign policy issues.

Other informants point out that they have gained new perspectives on politics in their own country through the process of having to explain their domestic political scene to the participants from the other country. Here is one example:

“One night, we should explain the Lebanese political scene to our Danish friends, and we were trying to map out the political parties in Lebanon. But this caused some surprise. ‘Oh, you’re not family, you’re religious...?’ or ‘You’re not religious...you’re family based?’. For us Lebanese we learned by seeing each other in a new light. And the Danes were surprised by how the Lebanese parties were religious or family based. I felt our way of doing things was completely normal until we did this exercise. It was like: ‘Hold on a second!’” (Lebanese participant)

### 5.2 The capacity building of the young politicians

In addition to changing perceptions and understandings the network also contributed to capacity building among the young politicians. Table 5.2 shows the percentage of Lebanese and Danish respondents, who ‘agree’ or ‘fully agree’ that they have improved specific skills:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lebanese resp.</th>
<th>Danish resp.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication skills</strong></td>
<td>71 %</td>
<td>68 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advocacy skills</strong></td>
<td>63 %</td>
<td>55 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cooperation skills</strong></td>
<td>54 %</td>
<td>86 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negotiation skills</strong></td>
<td>46 %</td>
<td>41 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilitation skills</strong></td>
<td>46 %</td>
<td>50 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project management skills</strong></td>
<td>42 %</td>
<td>73 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Campaigning skills</strong></td>
<td>29 %</td>
<td>23 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Making presentations</strong></td>
<td>13 %</td>
<td>32 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2

*Which skills did you improve by participating in the network? (several answers possible)*
As seen in Table 5.2, a majority of the Lebanese respondents believe that they have improved their communication and advocacy skills, while approximately half of them feel that they have improved their cooperation, negotiation and facilitation skills as a result of their participation in the network. Here is a typical statement from the interviews:

“My personal experience was good. A lot of skills were gained. First: Communication skills – how to communicate, how to do public speaking, and everything. We also gained skills from the element that the communication was with foreigners” (Lebanese participant)

With regard to some types of skills, there are some noticeable differences between the answers of the Danish and the Lebanese respondents. For instance, a clear majority of the Danish respondents believe that they improved their project management skills (73 per cent) and their cooperation skills (86 per cent) compared to 42 and 54 per cent among the Lebanese. Equally, 32 per cent of the Danes believe that they have improved their skills in relation to making presentations, compared to just 13 per cent of the Lebanese.

Many informants highlight the significance of the age difference in relation to these specific differences. Most of the Danish participants were considerably younger than their Lebanese counterparts. This meant that the Lebanese were often more advanced and experienced in relation to common administrative skills, such as project management and making presentations – which might explain the lower percentages of Lebanese expressing they developed these skills as a specific result of their participation in the network.

Conversely, higher percentages among the Lebanese than among the Danes believe that they improved their skills in relation to advocacy, negotiation and campaigning by taking part in the network. This pattern is also clearly reflected among the informants in the interviews.

To explain this difference, many informants point to the significance of cultural differences between Lebanon and Denmark in relation to both the education system and the political system.

Whereas the Danish education system and the political youth parties usually encourage young people to participate actively in teamwork and to develop, argue and advocate their own opinions from an early age – this is not common practice in the Lebanese school system or in the political youth organisations in Lebanon, according to most of the informants. Therefore, learning and developing advocacy skills were much more important and groundbreaking for the Lebanese participants – even though they were older and more experienced than the Danish participants in other areas.

A selection of quotations may illustrate this point:

“The advocacy training worked very well... I had no clue about advocacy or the process (before DUF). I learned how advocacy could be processed step by step” (Lebanese participant)

“On a personal level, the advocacy training empowered me. You feel you’re stronger when you are debating, discussing, sharing and participating in politics” (Lebanese participant)
“Young people in Denmark are taught and encouraged to work independently, to develop their own ideas and to participate actively in teamwork from a very young age. So we are used to making campaigns and advocating our opinions. Many of the Lebanese participants were not used to this in the same way. Too a much larger degree, they were trained to be supporters of their mother parties and they were more used to represent the official opinions of the party than to develop or advocate their own opinions. So there were significant cultural differences between the experiences of the Danish and the Lebanese participants – and these differences became very visible when we were learning skills” (Danish participant)

It is therefore an important achievement that the majority of the Lebanese respondents (63 per cent) believe that they improved their advocacy skills as a result of the network – and that several Lebanese informants believe this to be the single most important impact of the DUF network in relation to their personal skills.

Another important personal learning experience for many Lebanese was the use of concrete democratic methods and procedures inside the network itself, such as secret ballot voting. Most of the Lebanese participants were not accustomed to practicing such methods or to participating in such procedures in their own youth organisations:

“The DUF network was very democratic – we used to vote. And actually, I had never voted before in my life, because there were no elections (in my youth organisation). In DUF we used to count the votes and we used secret ballots – for me it was new!” (Lebanese participant)

Most of the respondents and informants in this impact study thus agree about the overall positive impact of the network in relation to the development of individual skills and learning. However, recurring statements in the interviews also suggest that a minority of the Lebanese did not react equally positive to the skills-based approach.

One of the informants puts it like this:

“For me it was about actually getting or really gaining skills as a young politician. The programme and the agenda were about technical skills. Moderation, games, icebreaking games, trust games, teamwork during workshops, brainstorming and so on. So it was much more about techniques than political. But I don’t know if all the Lebanese youth politicians saw it as an opportunity to learn skills or if some just saw it as a way to represent their party?” (Lebanese participant)

Also, the informants agree that the level of activity and motivation varied to a great extent among the Lebanese participants, and the individual-level impact in terms of improved skills was rather limited among the least active and least motivated Lebanese participants. Among the majority of more motivated and active participants, however, the overall picture is still very positive in relation to the individual-level outcome.
5.3 Most beneficial activities in relation to individual-level outcomes

The informants point to different types of activities when asked to identify the activities, which were most beneficial for their personal learning in the DUF network.

The overall response distribution in Table 5.3 below indicates that the majority of the different types of activities in the network were important and impact-effective elements – with the possible exception of “Presentations at the seminars” identified as most beneficial by only 1 in 4 Lebanese. On average, each respondent identifies between 3 and 4 different activities as “most beneficial” for his/her individual learning. This further indicates that most of the different activities seem to have had positive impacts at the individual level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Lebanese resp.</th>
<th>Danish resp.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Debating political issues at the seminars</td>
<td>79 %</td>
<td>77 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting political institutions in Denmark / Lebanon</td>
<td>75 %</td>
<td>41 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working in action groups</td>
<td>71 %</td>
<td>50 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social activities at the seminars</td>
<td>54 %</td>
<td>68 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools introduced at the seminars</td>
<td>46 %</td>
<td>41 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations at the seminars</td>
<td>25 %</td>
<td>41 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A majority of the respondents from both countries identify “Debating political issues at the seminars” and “Social activities at the seminars” as most beneficial, but the overall response distribution is quite varied, and there are also noticeable differences between the answers of the Lebanese and the Danish.

Although less than half of the respondents identify “Tools introduced at the seminars” as most beneficial in relation to their individual learning, this element is clearly identified by most informants in the interviews as a very important element when it comes to the organisational-level impact (see chapter 6). Several Lebanese informants also highlight that the tools learned through the DUF network have been easy for them to remember and to use again after their participation in the network.
While the tools are therefore not identified as the most valuable part of the programme in relation to the individual learning of the former participants, they are certainly identified as valuable in relation to the possibility of sharing individual learning from the DUF network. Therefore, the authors of this report believe that the introduction of tools at the seminars should nonetheless be considered a central and important element in possible future cross-political projects by DUF. Some of the Lebanese informants – who participated very actively in the network – even believe that the tools they acquired through the DUF project have been instrumental in changing the way they see and practice political work in general.

Here are some examples:

“What I am really proud of and how I work is actually from the DUF project. The working groups were based on real teamwork and the brainstorming exercises and the advocacy skills – these are all DUF tools! I have a whole booklet of (notes from the) DUF that I use. You know, the tree of thinking, the fish bone and all those DUF tools. You know: The way to tackle stuff, the commitment and the whole experience” (Lebanese participant)

“I have learned how to do politics from the Danish way and I keep using the tools” (Lebanese participant)

When it comes to working in action groups, most of the respondents in the survey indicate that this activity was among the most beneficial activities in relation to their individual learning. However, informants from both countries also agree that some action groups worked much better than others, that it was sometimes very difficult to find common political ground, and that the Danish and the Lebanese participants sometimes grew tired of each other because of different expectations and different understandings of the possible and realistic outcomes of the cross-political work in relation to political change.

While several Danish informants believe that some of the Lebanese participants should have been more active in the action groups – several Lebanese participants believe that the Danish participants often had unrealistic expectations and lacked understanding of the nature of the political scene in Lebanon. This sometimes led to decreased motivation, misunderstandings or growing fatigue among the participants – although the majority of the Lebanese participants still believe that they learned a lot from taking part in the action groups.

Here are two quotes exemplifying the different perceptions:

“We didn’t really move forward (with the goals of the action group), and therefore I guess the Lebanese will answer that they did not learn an awful lot from it” (Danish participant)

“Maybe somehow there was not enough understanding of the Lebanese mind-set among the Danes? The Danes put up too high demands for the Lebanese participants. But in fact the Lebanese learned a lot!” (Lebanese participant)

While the participants were able to find common political ground on issues such as increasing gender equality and/or lowering the voting age in Lebanon, it proved much more difficult to find a common understanding of how (and how intensely) to work together to
reach political goals in relation to such issues. While the Danish participants often had high expectations and pushed for intense cooperation, the Lebanese participants were often less hopeful about achieving political results in these areas of politics and they therefore often chose to prioritize other political subjects in their daily voluntary political work.

In hindsight, several informants from both countries therefore agree that the action groups should perhaps have concentrated more on cross-political learning processes and developing negotiating skills rather than focusing on creating political changes and achieving end results in relation to difficult political topics:

“Too much emphasis was placed on the political work in the action groups. But the travels and the seminars contributed enormously to the individual learning and the understanding of the political standpoints of the others. That's useful. Perhaps there should be more focus on the learning potential of working together than on creating political resolutions and such?” (Danish participant)

“I think the focus of the action groups became too goal-oriented. The measure of success became how many people will attend our conference and so on. So the action groups somehow removed the focus from the content and the skills to planning and practical stuff... This took a lot of energy from the network” (Lebanese participant)

It is important to remember that not all informants agree with these sentiments, and that the majority of the respondents identify both the different activities at the seminars and working in action groups as most beneficial to their individual learning. This also includes informants who believe the goals of the political action groups were unrealistic:

“I knew we were not going to get anywhere with lowering the voting age – but we did all the technical stuff surrounding that. Building up the campaign. The process in that was important, but the campaign itself was lost from the beginning... But we acquired technical skills and the indirect effects of the advocacy campaign were interesting because we really got to meet and work together” (Lebanese participant)

Although it is apparent that the action groups thus contributed positively to the individual learning process of most participants, it is equally apparent that DUF should consider the format of the action group component in relation to possible future cross-political networks (see recommendations in chapters 7 and 3).

To sum up regarding the seminars, both the overall format and the skills-based approach seem to be working quite well in relation to the capacity building of the young politicians, and most of the components are identified as most beneficial in relation to individual-level outcomes. There are only minor points of criticism from the former participants and suggestions for possible improvements are included in chapters 3 and 7.
6. ORGANISATIONAL-LEVEL OUTCOMES

This chapter looks at the organisational-level outcomes of the cross-political network – as experienced by the former participants.

The first part of the chapter looks at the perceived relevance of the different activities in the DUF network in relation to organisational-level outcomes. The second part sums up the major viewpoints in relation to the perceived impact in relation to increased youth empowerment and/or democratic changes in the youth organisations. Finally, the chapter examines the role of the former participants as possible “agents-of-change” in relation to organisational-level outcomes – including an assessment of the impact already achieved and an assessment of the possible future impact.

6.1 The relevance of the activities for the youth organisations

As illustrated in Table 6.1, a clear majority of the respondents – from both countries – believe that the content of the DUF network was either “relevant” or “very relevant” for their youth party or youth organisation. Given the considerable differences between the participating youth organisations, this is a remarkably positive result. It indicates that DUF was able to demonstrate the relevance of the chosen skills and tools to members of very different youth organisations in both countries.

### Table 6.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>Lebanese resp.</th>
<th>Danish resp.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevant / Very relevant</td>
<td>87 %</td>
<td>86 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither relevant nor irrelevant</td>
<td>9 %</td>
<td>9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrelevant / Very Irrelevant</td>
<td>4 %</td>
<td>5 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although most of the Lebanese informants agree that the competencies, skills and tools focused on in the DUF network were relevant in relation to the internal development of their youth organisation, this does not mean that they were always able to apply or use them in this sense. As described in Section 6.2, there were different kinds of drivers and barriers in relation to the subsequent implementation of the skills and tools inside the youth
organisations, which meant that the organisational-level impact was greater in some organisations than in others.

However, all the Lebanese informants – across political divides – agree that the competencies, skills and tools of the DUF network had an important impact in relation to the \textit{external} relations and the \textit{external} lines of communication between the Lebanese youth organisations. Here are two examples of statements:

“We don’t use the tools inside our own party, but we use them in relation to dialogue with organisations from the other coalition” (Lebanese participant)

“The project helped to de-escalate tensions between the youth branches in Lebanon” (Lebanese participants)

According to several informants, the use of DUF related skills and tools as well as the cross-political ties established through the network also helped to defuse tensions in relation to student and youth politics in Lebanon in a broader sense:

“DUF had a major effect on not letting the worst tensions and conflicts in Lebanese society zip into university and student life. That actually did happen, and I would say that on that level DUF did have a major impact” (Lebanese participant)

“(One of the youth organisations) tried to ensure that there would not be any problems at campus related to the university election. And in order to ensure that and get everyone to the table, they used the contacts they gained through the DUF network and International Alert. This later led to forming a Lebanese network for that. So now we do have a local Lebanese youth network, and almost everyone is in this network” (Lebanese participant)

In this sense, the DUF network – as well as the International Alert project\(^1\) – seems to have had an important \textit{cross-organisational} impact. Some informants also believe that the DUF network helped to provide some of the inspiration for the establishment of the \textit{Beirut Medinati} – an independent and volunteer-led campaign to elect a municipal council of qualified but politically unaffiliated individuals for the municipal election in May 2016.\(^2\)

One of the candidates of the Beirut Medinati – who took part in the DUF network – says:

“I realised a lot of things I didn’t realise before, because of the DUF network...and I think these things led us to found what we did for the municipal election (the Beirut Medinati). I can’t quantify the inspiration from the DUF, but I know there is an inspiration, and I know there is a motivation, so there are both. To me, it is not only important to learn skills, but it is also important to know what you can do, and what you have to do.” (Lebanese participant)

\(^1\) The International Alert project has brought together leaders from the youth wings of the political parties in Lebanon since 2009 in order to build trust and enhance the possibilities for a lasting peace in Lebanon. See \url{www.international-alert.org/lebanon}.

\(^2\) The Beirut Medinati received 40 per cent of the total popular vote in the 2016 municipal election in Beirut and as a non-sectarian citizen movement it represented a notable change in the political landscape, which is usually dominated by the existing and often strongly sectarian parties.
When asked to identify the most relevant activities of the DUF network in relation to their youth organisations, the Lebanese participants give different answers. Some point to particular tools and dialogue exercises, while others point to the more general inspiration from learning about the methods and organisation of the Danish youth parties and about the relationship between the youth organisations and the mother parties in Denmark.

With regards to the relevance for the Danish youth organisations, the Danish informants primarily highlight the relevance of the DUF network in relation to the development of new types of foreign policy-oriented ‘committees’ inside their parties or in relation to the establishment of cross-political friendships and increased dialogue with members from other Danish youth parties. In this way the DUF network also helped to establish a better cross-political dialogue between the youth parties in Denmark:

“The cooperation between the Danish members and the friendships which came out of the DUF network was also rewarding for the Danish youth parties. We got to know each other and the opinions of the other parties much better – and we were able to cooperate and to challenge each other in a better way” (Danish participant)

“An important side-effect of the cross-political network was based on our discussions about how to anchor the experiences from the network and the experiences of the individual participants in our own organisation. This led me to work for organisational changes inside my youth party... We established a new ‘Cooperation committee’ with representatives from our project groups in relation to different countries... and this led to a real organisational change related to the coordination of our international activities... I was obviously not the only one contributing to these changes, but it grew from the discussions” (Danish participant)

6.2 Increased youth empowerment and democratic reforms?

While a clear majority of the respondents agree about the relevance of the DUF network in relation to the cross-political dialogue between the youth organisations, opinions are more divided when it comes to the impact of the DUF network in relation to creating more youth empowerment and/or democratic changes inside the youth organisations. As seen in Table 6.2 below, 67 per cent of the Lebanese respondents believe the DUF network contributed to more youth empowerment in their organisation, while 42 per cent believe the DUF network led to some democratic changes or reforms in their youth organisation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.2 Participation in the DUF network has contributed to...</th>
<th>Agree or strongly agree (Lebanese)</th>
<th>Agree or strongly agree (Danish)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More youth empowerment in my youth organisation</td>
<td>67 %</td>
<td>51 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some democratic changes/reforms in my youth organisation</td>
<td>42 %</td>
<td>40 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Lebanese informants, who emphasize the impact of the network in relation to more youth empowerment in their youth organisations, typically focus on positive changes in relation to their organisations’ overall approach to practising youth politics rather than changes at a deeper structural level. Here are two examples:

“As a youth organisation in Lebanon – we were not actually working on youth issues before DUF. We were working as an executing branch of the mother party at demonstrations. We were not that focused on what the youth need – or in what way their needs are different from the other citizens’ needs. So when we went to DUF and we saw that the Danish youth organisations are working on something related to education and also when we saw the pupils working on solving the problems in the school – this was something crazy for us! How could the 9 to 16 year olds have their own organisation? In Lebanon, the mentality is that these are kids and we cannot listen to them. This made us realise that we need to make some points and programmes that are only related to youth issues. For example we started now discussing tuition fees, how to have new technologies incorporated in the education system and how to develop the education system” (Lebanese participant)

“The way that the policy making, the development and the process in the meetings happened (in the DUF network) was different than here. It was more about participation. Here it is usually more about receiving orders and implementing. DUF highlighted the importance of participation in policy-making. And I am not talking about the structure – it is more the mentality. The culture of the youth was not to participate a lot, but now we try to give them the skills to participate and contribute in the long run. The general momentum and focus on Lebanon from international organisations made this development possible in my youth organisation” (Lebanese participant)

Other informants emphasize that they were not able to use their individual-level learnings to create more youth empowerment in their party. Here are some examples:

“It had a positive effect in us as individuals, but it didn’t reach the party” (Lebanese participant)

“On the personal level, I gained a lot. But it was difficult to take my experience and use it in Lebanon” (Lebanese participant)

“We did learn a lot about advocacy. Even if we did not implement it here in Lebanon” (Lebanese participant)

As seen in Table 6.3 below, most of the Lebanese tried to implement and use their learning from the network in their organisations – and they typically did so by using tools from the DUF network in their organisation (61 per cent). It is also worth noting that 43 per cent of the Lebanese participants have passed on tools from the DUF network to other members of their youth organisation – and most of these respondents also indicate that their participation in the network led to more youth empowerment and to some democratic changes or reforms in their organisation (see Table 6.2). This indicates, that the DUF tools played an important role in relation to the positive organisational-level impact experienced by some of the informants.
In the interviews, several informants also highlight the DUF tools as important in relation to creating changes at the organisational-level. According to these informants, most of the tools were relatively simple to use and to remember – which made them useful and also relatively easy to pass on to other members. Here is an exemplifying quote:

“The DUF tools helped our party in the internal dialogue we have. The SMART-system, the SWOT-system and all the tools we learned about. We have been using them afterwards in my organisation” (Lebanese participant)

“Before, we would just come, sit down, discuss the political situation and point out: These are the bad guys, these are the good guys. Now there is actually a white board, a pen, a paper. Discussing in a civilised manner, more trust gets built because of these activities. Icebreakers. We did all that and it had a good impact” (Lebanese participant)

As shown in Table 6.3 however, a larger share of the former Danish participants – compared to the Lebanese – actively tried to implement learning from their network in their youth organisations in several different ways:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>Lebanese resp.</th>
<th>Danish resp.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have used tools from the DUF network in my organisation</td>
<td>61 %</td>
<td>64 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have made presentations about the DUF network in my youth organisation</td>
<td>52 %</td>
<td>68 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have passed on tools from the DUF network to other members of my youth organisation</td>
<td>43 %</td>
<td>55 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have not shared or implemented learning from the DUF network in my youth organisation</td>
<td>9 %</td>
<td>9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know / Other</td>
<td>4 %</td>
<td>9 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the interviews, the Lebanese informants all agree that while the DUF network led to changes in some of the Lebanese youth organisations, it did not have an impact on other youth organisations.

The informants offer several explanations for the lack of impact in some organisations. Some of the former Lebanese participants found it very difficult to overcome barriers for youth empowerment and democratic changes inside their organisations, while others did not see it as a realistic or desirable task for them to implement such changes. A recurring explanation in the interviews is that some of the Lebanese participants were not in a position, which would allow them to implement youth empowerment or democratic changes inside their organisations, even if they wanted to. According to these informants, it often requires sufficient political and personal clout, and sometimes personal ties to the leadership of the mother party, to be able to change existing practices or structures inside some of the most traditional and/or sectarian based youth organisations.

Finally, most informants agree that the DUF network could perhaps have included more support and advice on how to implement changes at the organisational level and how to be an effective agent-of-change. Others believe that DUF should have set more concrete goals in relation to the implementation at the organisational level, or that they should have done more to make a change themselves. Below are two quotes illustrating the above:

“I made presentations in the party about the network and we needed to do it. But it didn’t make it to the organisational level – maybe it was our own fault” (Lebanese participant)

“It was difficult for us to see what their organisations gained from it. Perhaps DUF should have made some measuring tools or guides for the Lebanese youth organisations to follow? Set some goals... In relation to the mother parties it was difficult for the Lebanese participants to gain influence – unless they were related by family to the leadership of the party” (Danish participant)

“We worked on it. But because it can’t be done by youth in our organisation in Lebanon, so we didn’t take it further” (Lebanese participant)

When looking at the positive examples of Lebanese participants, who believe that they were able to facilitate more youth empowerment and to put some democratic changes into motion in their organisations, it is interesting to notice that all of them were involved in a bilateral partnership between their own youth organisation and a Danish youth party following or parallel to their participation in the DUF network.

This indicates that the bilateral partnerships played an important role in supporting and furthering the organisational-level impact of the DUF network experienced by around 40 per cent of the Lebanese respondents. As the bilateral partnerships mostly included Lebanese organisations affiliated (at that time) with the March 14 coalition, it is also apparent that the organisational-level impact of the DUF network mostly affected “March 14 organisations”.

Section 6.3 below takes a closer look at the characteristics of the positive organisational-level changes, which took place in some of these organisations, and the characteristics of the agents-of-change, who helped to set the changes in motion.
6.3 Examples of positive organisational-level changes

The Lebanese informants mention several examples of positive organisational-level changes in Lebanese youth organisations, which they believe the DUF network helped to inspire or bring about. It is also worth noting that the examples are typically mentioned or confirmed by several different informants across various organisations.

The examples cover different types of organisational-level changes, but it is a common pattern that the changes have most often been implemented by individuals, who were quite active in the DUF network, participated in a bilateral partnership with a Danish youth party and have succeeded in maintaining or achieving a position of political influence in their youth organisation.

In other words, the changes have largely depended on individual agents-of-change, who were motivated and convinced that their organisation could benefit from the tools and the approach to policymaking they learned through the DUF network. The positive changes seem to be most visible in youth organisations where several former participants in the DUF network actively promoted DUF tools and values and thereby helped to strengthen and maintain the impact.

Finally, the informants point out that the changes were often brought about as the result of a broader trend, which was partly inspired by the DUF network and partly by other factors. It is therefore difficult to isolate or quantify the exact impact of the DUF network in relation to the organisational changes. Nevertheless, most Lebanese informants agree that the DUF network directly inspired positive organisational changes in 4-5 different youth organisations.

While several informants agree that the most recently established of these youth organisations “almost built the whole party on the network”, the changes in the other 3-4 youth organisations were more incremental yet still important. One of the Lebanese informants sums up the changes in relation to the youth organisations as follows:

“The DUF network was very beneficial for our movement, and I can name a few other political parties in Lebanon that have changed the way they work. (One of the organisations) is shifting towards becoming a secular organisation. (Another organisation) made changes on the youth level and are working with international partners. For the first time, (a third organisation) is having elections – this is the first time and it was pushed by the youth. And one of the members of (a fourth organisation), who used to be in the DUF network is now the youth leader in that organisation” (Lebanese participant)

According to most Lebanese informants, all of the abovementioned youth organisations have thus adopted tools from the DUF network in relation to their internal work with youth capacity building and youth participation, as well as in relation to their external work with cross-political dialogue in Lebanon and building international partnerships.

While some examples refer to formal democratic changes (i.e. introducing internal elections as mentioned above), most of the changes could more adequately be described as changes in
relation to the *dialogical culture* inside the organisations. In other words, the positive changes seen in all 4-5 organisations are more related to democracy as understood by the Danish philosopher *Hal Koch*, who argues that the essence of democracy is dialogue, discussion and respect for the opinions of other people.\(^3\)

One of the informants sums up this type of impact in his youth organisation like this:

*“You can now stand up against the leader at meetings”* (Lebanese participant)

Several informants also highlight the importance of the long-term participation in the DUF network in relation to organisations experiencing this type of change; the perception being that the continuous influx of inspiration brought back to the organisation from participants in the DUF network helped to strengthen and anchor the change over time:

*“When participating in a network like DUF, you will go back to your organisation and say: ‘Guys, we need to do something like this’. So they came back with more information and skills to give the training to their fellow colleagues here. For instance, when participating in a workshop on advocacy, the person who participated in the workshop would give the same workshop to the organisation. It was not only DUF contributing to this development, but DUF helped it”* (Lebanese participant)

The participation of several different members in the DUF network was also important in relation to changing the “foot soldier tradition” in the organisation mentioned above. It conveyed legitimacy that the change was carried out by several different agents-of-change inside the organisation. Also, the timing of the DUF project is emphasized in several interviews in relation to the organisational effects. Here is an example:

*“Back then, when the DUF (network) started, there was almost no such thing in Lebanon. Only 2 to 3 times a year an NGO from abroad would come and do training in the organisations. Now we have a department with the only duty to train our youth. We have more partners and we do training around the year. The DUF project helped this development, but it is also a broader trend”* (Lebanese participant)

The DUF tools have also been used in some of the organisations to discuss and develop the youth policies of the organisation on a more strategic level. Here is an example:

*“We did a strategic workshop on trying to figure out where we are heading and how we are heading there? And then we tried to work ourselves in that direction. All these DUF techniques were used. We had a professional moderator but we did the problem tree, we talked about the problem and the solution, so all these techniques were used”* (Lebanese participant)

As mentioned above, the DUF network also helped to inspire change in relation to the *external* dialogue between the youth organisations in Lebanon and in relation to increased

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3 Hal Koch (1945): *Hvad er demokrati?* (2.udg., 1960)
participation in international networks. One of the informants describes these types of impact as follows:

“The whole involvement of our youth in (an international political network) was because of their contacts in the DUF. The same goes for (another organisation), who started having triangular relations to Danish as well as other parties in Europe. And a lot of doors like that opened for a lot of other parties (mentions two other parties). It did. And it slipped through to NGOs working in Lebanon” (Lebanese participant)

Often the bilateral partnerships with Danish youth parties helped to support the processes of internationalisation and capacity building inside the Lebanese youth organisations:

“We benefitted incredibly from it, because we did this bilateral collaboration with (Danish youth party), and we did some projects that were super interesting. We did a political communication project as well as campaigns on gender equality and on the role of women in politics. And we benefitted incredibly from it. Mainly in relation to technical skills, strategic planning, political communication and advocacy” (Lebanese participant)

The bilateral partnerships and the DUF network also led to positive examples of increased internationalisation and capacity building in the Danish youth parties. Several Danish informants thus emphasize that the Danish youth parties strengthened their organisations in relation to international projects in the Middle East and greatly improved their knowledge and network in the region as a derived result of their participation in the DUF network:

“I think the DUF network has kick-started waves across the board at the organisational level in the Danish youth parties. Not just in relation to Lebanon – but in relation to the MENA region as such. And it has also created a pretty strong network on the individual level” (Danish participant)

As with the Lebanese youth organisations, however, it is also clear that the positive changes have only taken place in some of the Danish youth parties (see also Table 6.2, page 25). Nor was this, in the eyes of several Danish informants, the main objective of the network. One of these informants says: “It did not change a lot in our party, but I believe it made a big difference in relation to the Lebanese parties” (Danish participant)

6.4 A broader societal impact?

Finally, it is important to touch upon the potential long-term impact of the DUF network in relation to the mother parties and the broader political scene in both Lebanon and Denmark. Although the main organisational-level impact has so far been at the youth level – and has only affected some of the youth organisations – it is worth mentioning that some of the former participants in the DUF network have already risen to positions of political power in their mother parties, while others may follow in the years to come. Another secondary effect of the DUF network – mentioned by several informants – has been increased activity in the NGO field in Lebanon, partly driven by former participants of the DUF network. Below is a
selection of quotes testifying to the possible ripple effects of the network in relation to the broader civic and political life in the two countries:

“I have co-founded three NGO’s since my participation in the DUF network – and one of them was founded with two other former participants” (Lebanese participant)

“I see it today – 10 years later – that the people in our party, who were active in the international committee in our youth party and took part in the DUF project, became very responsible, very proficient when it comes to project management and very wise in relation to international politics. So they gained both social, organisational and economic competencies. And I think that has strengthened not just our intercultural relations, but also the Danish democracy as such” (Danish participant)

“One of the guys who started his experience with DUF – he is now running for vice president of his mother party. He is bringing ideas from DUF and he is one of the guys trying to build the whole training-thing” (Lebanese participant)

“I am now an international officer in the (mother) party, and I would not myself have gone so far without DUF. And I am using the exact same tools we used in DUF. I was in Ankara doing training on conflict transformation between Kurds and Turks, and I needed tools to work with that. So I referred to DUF, my notes. And I referred to DUF to do the simulation game exactly on conflict transformation. And so many people are doing this” (Lebanese participant)

“I was able to make a lot of change in our youth party, and the other party member who followed after me in the DUF project continued working in the organisation, and now she is the president of the youth department” (Lebanese participant)

“Through the DUF network I gained an enormous amount of insight into the specific type of democracy and the challenges facing women in politics in Lebanon. That was very instructive and it is an insight that I am still using today. I have used it especially in my position as chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee (in the Danish Parliament), where topics related to the Middle East – including Lebanon and other areas surrounding Iraq and Syria – are obviously high on the agenda. To have this type of detailed insight and to still have contacts and friends in this area makes you understand it in a different way. I can see what more than a million refugees does to a country of our size and how fragile their democracy is, because I have participated in discussions about how to strengthen it. I have seen how it is organised, I have studied it and I have discussed it with the young people who were politically active in Lebanon, as I have later discussed it with Lebanese politicians” (Danish participant)

It is not possible to quantify the broader societal impact of the DUF network on the basis of the available data in this impact study. Nevertheless, a sound assessment of the overall impact of the DUF network should include examples like those above, illustrating as they do how some former participants have actively used their learning from the DUF network in their subsequent political careers or in other influential positions in society. In this sense, the DUF network has also contributed more broadly to the nature and development of the political scene in Lebanon as well as in Denmark – and former participants may continue to do so in the coming years, as they move forward in their careers.
7. FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Shortly before these lines were written, the Danish Foreign Ministry has decided to discontinue the public funding of DUF’s activities in the MENA region, choosing instead to fund the activities of other applicants for the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme (DAPP) from 2017 to 2021. As a result, DUF may be compelled to scale down their engagement in this region considerably in the coming years.

Nevertheless, it is important for DUF to consider possible relevant future perspectives in continuation of this impact study. The positive effects of the DUF network in Lebanon detailed in this study suggest that the general approach and the methods used in the cross-political network may be relevant for future international DUF projects in the MENA region as well as in other regions.

At the same time, it is also important to consider possible ways to improve and adjust the cross-political concept should DUF decide to carry out comparable cross-political projects in the future.

Consequently, this chapter presents some of the most important points of constructive criticism and ideas for improvements voiced by the informants in this study, as well as some broader reflections on the possible use of the cross-political concept in relation to future international DUF projects.

7.1 Ideas for improving the cross-political concept

The informants in this impact study have shared different ideas for improving the cross-political network concept used in the Danish-Lebanese network between 2005 and 2014. Although most of the informants agree on what might be improved in order to have an even larger impact, they are often not in full agreement when it comes to the question of how.

The main ideas for possible improvement put forward by the informants are:

- Improve the recruitment procedures
- Adjust the balance between processes and results
- Deal with the inclusion/exclusion mechanisms
- Reconsider the role of the external coordinator

Below, each area is described in more detail.
Improve the recruitment procedures

Most informants – from both countries – agree that DUF would have been able to enhance the impact of the cross-political network in Lebanon by improving the recruitment procedures. Although most of the Lebanese participants were motivated, active and potentially able to create organisational-level impact in their own organisation (over time), there were still too many “foot-soldiers” and/or participants, who did not contribute as actively as they could have.

At the same time, most informants agree that the bottom-up approach of the DUF network was an important component in the project, which differentiated it from other projects focusing only on the leaders of the youth organisations. Here is an example quote:

“What DUF did is better than what (another international project) did. The leaders were meeting in other international projects. But DUF was bottom up. It takes some time to make it grow. Not only one year. You have to make long-term projects” (Lebanese participant)

While the bottom-up approach thus is an important and valuable part of DUF’s concept, most informants agree that this approach requires recruitment of active, talented and up-and-coming youth politicians rather than “foot-soldiers”. In other words, the participants should not be recruited from the very bottom of the youth organisations, but rather from the “middle layer”.

Although the Danish and Lebanese informants agree that recruitment procedures could be improved, they typically propose different solutions. While several Danish informants believe that DUF should have increased the requirements for participation – in order to set a higher threshold – the Lebanese informants typically believe that DUF should instead have done more to highlight the benefits of participating, in order to attract the most ambitious, up-and-coming youth politicians.

Finally, most informants agree that the network would have benefitted from the recruitment of Danish participants from a larger segment of the Danish youth parties. While participants from the Danish People’s Party Youth took part in the network for a few years, the youth wing of the Socialist People’s Party and the youth organisation affiliated with the Red-Green Alliance (Socialistisk Ungdomsfoni) did not take part. DUF might benefit from allocating further resources to recruit members from these organisations in future cross-political networks.

Adjust the balance between processes and results

Most of the informants believe that the most important individual- and organisational-level effects of the DUF network are related to the outcome of the processes in the network (i.e. the advocacy training, the bilateral cooperation, the cooperation in the action groups, the activities at the seminars etc.), whereas the end-results in terms of making political changes in relation to lowering the voting age, furthering women’s rights etc. were very limited.

Some of the Danish participants see this as a failure and believe that the Lebanese participants in the action groups should have worked more intensely to bring about real political changes in these areas. Conversely several Lebanese participants were primarily
interested in working on these political issues in order to learn from the process of advocating them, etc., since they did not believe that they would be able to change the political agenda on big issues such as voting age or women’s rights – even though they agree that these are certainly important issues to work for in Lebanon. The different perspectives seem to have led to some misunderstandings and conflicts between the Danish and Lebanese participants in the network, which were not helpful in relation to maximising the impact of the learning.

On the basis of these experiences, it seems fair to suggest that DUF consider focusing more on the process and the learning perspectives of the cross-political cooperation than on achieving political end-goals. Perhaps the timeframe for the action group activities could be shorter or the end-goals stated more precisely and more easily achievable, in order to ensure that participants are encouraged by the achievement of small successes together rather than potentially disappointed or disillusioned by failed larger-scale ambitions.

A couple of quotes may illustrate the point:

“The work in the action groups became too intense and too focused on practicalities and end-results. Instead, the focus should be on the skills and on techniques in relation to project management. Give people the knowledge and the tools and then make ‘a small table’ instead of trying to build a big one” (Lebanese participant)

“Too much weight was put on the political work. The seminars and the dialogue, on the other hand, were very instructive and we learned a lot in terms of understanding the nature of politics in the other country. Perhaps focus should be more on the learning itself instead of making political resolutions and so on?” (Danish participant)

**Deal with inclusion/exclusion mechanisms**

The exclusion of representatives from the youth wing of Hezbollah in 2006 led to discussions between the participants in the network. Most of the Danish informants in this study believe the decision was counterproductive, since Hezbollah is a major force in Lebanese politics, while the Lebanese informants are very divided on the question of whether it was the right decision to exclude the youth wing of Hezbollah due to the organisation’s involvement in the armed conflict with Israel. While most informants agree that DUF handled the consequent discussions quite well, they also believe that the rules for inclusion and exclusion should have been stated more precisely from the beginning.

In spite of their disagreement on the exclusion of Hezbollah, the informants agree that it was the right decision to carry on with the activities of the network after the exclusion. Although it seems to have been a disadvantage that one of the major Lebanese organisations was not represented in the network, nearly all the participants from the other Lebanese organisations still believe that they benefitted individually from taking part in the network (see chapter 5), the network established important bridges between the other youth organisations during a time of political turmoil (see chapter 4) and the network also led to experiences of positive changes in terms of youth empowerment and democratic changes at the organisational level in at least 4-5 of the participating Lebanese youth organisations (see chapter 6).
In light of the above, DUF should not necessarily be discouraged from carrying out cross-political network activities in countries or settings where it is not possible to include representatives from all youth organisations. Although DUF should strive for the broadest possible representation, it is still legitimate and worthwhile to go ahead with cross-political network activities, as long as the rules for inclusion and exclusion are stated clearly and explicitly.

Nearly all informants disagree with the decision to discontinue the network in continuation of the exclusion of the youth wing of SSNP in 2014 due to spillover effects from the war in Syria. While opinions are again divided about the decision to exclude SSNP, most informants believe that DUF should have continued the network activities. At the time of the interviews, there was a widespread desire for more knowledge about the reasons for the discontinuation of the network. Thus many informants feel that DUF should have communicated the reasons for the discontinuation more clearly. Finally, some informants believe that DUF should consider including NGOs in future networks and/or increase the participation of representatives from the diplomatic corps. Other informants disagree.

While increasing the involvement of relevant NGOs and/or strengthening cooperation with the diplomatic sphere in relation to specific activities or events may be deemed relevant, DUF should nonetheless acknowledge and consciously work towards sustaining the key values in the existing cross-political concept. One of the Danish informants underlines the importance of the focus on youth politicians in the DUF concept thus:

“It is a strong signal that international work should not only be for aid organisations or for people trying to save the world. The network gives room to be political and to be aligned with a political party – and it shows that this is not a dangerous thing. I think it is a very important value that there is a project, which is not for the aid workers, but for the politically motivated youth. I have no doubt that it strengthens democracy”

(Danish participant)

Reconsider the role of the coordinator in the partnering country
The informants agree that it was a good idea to appoint a Lebanese coordinator and that the Lebanese coordinators did a relatively good job considering their working conditions. However, several informants – including the two former coordinators themselves – also believe that the coordinators sometimes struggled to find the necessary time to carry out their tasks, since they were working on a voluntary basis.

These informants also believe that the coordinator should have been a non-partisan person instead of a youth politician participating in the DUF programme. In relation to possible future networks DUF should therefore reconsider the role and the profile of the coordinators in the partnering country or countries. Possible solutions could be the creation of a paid a part-time position and/or the recruitment of a non-partisan coordinator from outside the network.
7.2 Perspectives for future international DUF projects

Given the experienced impact of the cross-political network in Lebanon documented in this study, it is worth considering the extent to which a similar – and adequately adjusted – concept could work in relation to other potential partnering countries.

Although DUF’s involvement in the MENA region will most likely decrease in the coming years – given the recent reallocation of DAPP funding – it is nonetheless worth considering new cross-political networks in this region in the long run as well as comparable cross-political network projects in other regions.

In Europe, for instance, the current challenges in relation to European integration and the political divides in relation to issues such as migration, security, the EU and the crisis in Ukraine make it relevant to consider a cross-political and cross-national network involving young politicians from Denmark and from one or more relevant countries in Eastern and/or Western Europe.

Should DUF wish to advance a related cross-political concept in a different region it will – of course – require a thorough process of adjustment and adaptation in order to accommodate the needs and the specific context of the chosen region and countries. A quote from one of the former participants in the Danish-Lebanese network neatly sums up this point:

“Challenges are often local and Lebanon is unique in the sense of the country’s recent history and working with the repercussions of the civil war, which is a wound that is still bleeding. So in this sense, and in relation to the demographic composition and the sectarian dynamics, the country is unique. But I definitely think you can use the model from the Danish-Lebanese network and do something elsewhere. There has to be a real potential for change and young politicians with sufficient proficiency in English for it to make sense – and then you should be prepared to commit for a number of years in order to be able to make a real change”

(Danish participant)

Having met these basic requirements, the overall objectives of the cross-political network combined with the simplicity of the methods employed comprise a concept the relevance and applicability of which reaches far beyond the MENA region.