Support to the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee/Phase 3

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I - INTRODUCTION

Based on the UNRWA records of 1948, the total number of registered Palestinian refugees is 425,000 residing in 12 camps and other gatherings, representing 10% of the Lebanese population. According to the 2010 American University of Beirut (AUB) “Socio-Economic Survey of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon”\(^1\), of the 425,000 registered refugees only 260,000-280,000 currently reside in Lebanon, half of the population is younger than 25 year-old. 56% of refugees are jobless and only 37% of the working age population is employed: of the 120,000 Palestinian members of the Labor force, only 53,000 are working; 6% of this labor force has university training compared to 20% of the Lebanese labor force. For the higher education, only 13% of refugees older than 18 have the Baccalaureate or higher, compared to 17% for the Lebanese population.

They are frequently reported to face the worse living conditions among Palestinian refugees in the host countries of the Middle East. According to UNRWA, all 12 official refugee camps in Lebanon suffer from improper infrastructure, overcrowding, poverty and unemployment. UNRWA reports that Lebanon has the highest percentage of Palestinian refugees who are living in poverty and who are registered with the Agency’s “special hardship” programme. The AUB survey maintains that 2/3 of the Palestinian refugees are considered to be poor (160,000 individuals) with 6.6% under the line of extreme poverty.

The Palestinian camps consistently register social and economic indicators below national and regional averages. Palestinian refugees, many of which have resided in the country for more than 60 years, are regarded as foreigners and excluded from basic civil and socio-economic rights, including the right to work. Palestinian refugees work mainly in construction and manual labor. Others are left to work in the informal sector and are subjected to discrimination and exploitation. Only in 2005 did the Government of Lebanon issue a decree authorizing access of Palestinian refugees to eighty professional categories of jobs previously withheld from them. Additionally, they have restricted access to public education, adequate housing, and health services and are practically banned from forming associations. The Lebanese parliament issued law number 129 on August 17, 2010 amending article 59 of the 1946 labor law which stipulates the need for work permit tariffs and the reciprocity condition. The 2010 amendments revoked such tariffs and reciprocity conditions, a step anticipated to have a very positive impact on Palestinian refugees’ access to the labor market. Unfortunately, the needed implementation decrees to enforce this law are yet to be issued by the Minister of Labor.

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\(^1\) “Socio-Economic Survey of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon”, 2010/ UNRWA/ American University of Beirut, funded by the European Union.
In recent years, at the strategic level, the official Lebanese policy towards Palestinian refugees has undergone change to improve the living conditions of Palestinian refugees, while continuing to stress the right of return of the Palestinian refugees. The government of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora was the first to take a new approach toward Palestinian refugees, starting with the appointment of a dedicated inter-ministerial committee in 2005. The Lebanese Working Group on Palestinian Refugees, which became later known as the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC), was created in November 2005 by the Council of Ministers, in response to the goal set by the Government of Lebanon (GoL) to improve the living conditions of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. As per the official decree (41/2005), the LPDC committee’s broad mandate includes:

- Improving the living conditions of Palestinians residing in and outside refugee camps in Lebanon, in collaboration with UNRWA;
- Initiating a dialogue to manage the issue of arms inside the camps;
- Putting an end to the possession of illegal arms outside the camps;
- Studying opportunities for establishing diplomatic relations and representation between Lebanon and Palestine.

During the consecutive cabinets headed by Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, Ambassador Khalil Mikkawi was appointed as the president of the LPDC. This improved official Lebanese policy towards Palestinian refugees continued and was adopted by both Prime Minister Saad Hariri and currently with Prime Minister Najib Mikati. However, it is important to note out that the changes in the Lebanese political landscape had an impact on where the Palestine refugee file fits in within the list of priorities. Moreover, the presidency of the LPDC has witnessed four changes from 2009 to date. Me. Maya Majzoub served during PM. Saad Hariri’s unity cabinet (2010-2011) after Ambassador Mikkawi’s resignation at the end of 2009. She was later replaced by Ambassador Abdelmajid Kassir who was assigned by PM. Mikati in August 2011; he served until June 2012, when Dr. Khaldoun el Charif was appointed to head LPDC. Lately, Ex-Minister Hassan Meneymneh has been assigned on top of the LPDC by PM Tamam Salam in April 2014. This rotating leadership had an impact on LPDC’s overall direction, flow of work, and positioning on the level of the support provided by UNDP due to the various transition and adaptation periods.

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II- PROJECT BACKGROUND and OBJECTIVES

Based on initial consultations with IDRC/Canada, and upon subsequent request from the Lebanese Government, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) initiated its support to the LPDC in October 2006 and helped establish the technical team which currently serves as the secretariat for the Committee. A project document which further outlines the joint areas of collaboration was signed by the government and UNDP in January 2007. This project was initially extended for an additional three years 2009-2011, based on a substantive revision of this initiative in January 2009. Canada/IDRC has been the main funder to the LPDC since January 2007, and has supported the second phase of the project which was initiated at the beginning of 2009. UNDP also mobilized additional support for the LPDC’s project from Italy, and the UN Joint Programme on “Conflict Prevention and Peace Building in the North” funded by the MDG Fund, and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

This project builds upon the United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2010-2014 (Outcome 1: by 2014, governance reforms and practices, with focus on national dialogue and inclusive participation, and government effectiveness and accountability, are institutionalized at all levels). It is also in line with UNDP’s Country Programme Document (CDP) and Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP), which identifies “improving living conditions and trust among Palestinian and Lebanese surrounding communities” as a key priority area.

During the course of the five presidencies of the LPDC, the objective of the project remained to strengthen the capacity of the LPDC to develop and implement a comprehensive policy on the Palestinian refugee issues, with a view to improving the living conditions of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Nonetheless, the transition period from Ambassador Mekkawi to Me. Majzoub witnessed a re-alignment of project outputs with the vision of the new LPDC president and Government in June
2010. With Dr. el Charif, another re-alignment also took place in 2013 to respond to the GOL priorities. The outputs stipulated in the project document for 2013-2015 are:

- **Output 1:** LPDC inter-ministerial committee strengthened to implement its mandate; and the “Technical” and “Camp Management & Security” committees established and running;
- **Output 2:** LPDC acts as the focal point for national and international partners, on issues regarding Palestinian refugees in camps and surrounding communities, including the reconstruction of Nahr el Bared camp;
- **Output 3:** Policy and substantive advice provided to the inter-ministerial committee and the Government of Lebanon on Palestinian Refugees civil rights.

1) **Context Analysis**

   a- With the formation of the PM. Mikati cabinet and the appointment of Ambassador Kassir as a president to LPDC, the government renewed its commitment towards the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon through the Ministerial Statement and its adoption to the existing work plan of the LPDC. Shortly after, Dr. Khaldoun el Charif took the helm of LPDC with a renewed support of Prime Minister Mikati and full back up of all LPDC activities.

The cabinet’s commitment was clearly voiced in articles 12 and 13 of the Ministerial Statement as outlined below.

“12 – The cabinet renews its call to implement International resolutions that preserve the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, return to his homeland and establishment of a free independent state with Jerusalem as its capital. It also stresses its support to the right to return and rejection of settlement in all its forms. The cabinet also renews Lebanon’s attachment to the Arab Initiative for Peace that was adopted by the Beirut Summit in 2002 in such a way as to safeguard Arab rights and the rights of the Palestinian people. Until the complete return (of the Palestinian refugees), the government will work on ensuring the human and social rights of Palestinians living on Lebanese soil, implementing the laws that were adopted by your esteemed Council (It is addressed to Parliament) and looking after the Palestinian camps particularly Nahr el-Bared camp with a view to completing its reconstruction after securing the necessary funds for that from Arab and International
contributions. The government will call for strengthening UNRWA’s budget in order to allow the Agency to fulfill its humanitarian mission at the service of Palestinian refugees as before.

13 – The cabinet highlights the importance of maintaining national dialogue as a need to solve political conflicts and nurture the culture of dialogue amongst the Lebanese. It is also concerned with implementing the decisions of the national dialogue relating to ending the presence of Palestinian arms outside the Palestinian refugee camps and addressing the issues of security and weapons inside the camps. The cabinet also stresses that protecting the camps and maintaining the Palestinians’ security residing there, is the State’s responsibility only.

b- A second phase was initiated with PM Tammam Salam Cabinet; although the Ministerial Statement for PM Tammam Salam Cabinet does not address the Palestinian refugees’ issue directly, the PM has formally expressed full support to the LPDC and its activities through his support and adoption of the new vision. A clear sign can also be identified with the assignment of Dr. Hassan Mneymneh, an Ex- Minister and well know political figure, on the helmet of the LPDC. Dr. Mneymneh assignment; succeeding Dr. el-Charif; was one of the smoothest transitions in LPDC history. Dr. El-Charif handed-over his responsibilities to the new President and highlighting mostly the following projects:

1) Restructuring LPDC according to the draft law proposal to be transferred from the Cabinet to the Lebanese Parliament shifting LPDC from a consultative body with a broad mandate into an executive intergovernmental body designated by the “High Commission for Palestinian Refugees Affairs” while providing new dynamics for a better response to the arising challenges that Lebanon is facing;

2) Establishing the National Observatory for Palestinian Refugees Affairs: to respond to the GoL urgent need for clear and accurate information on living conditions of Palestinian Refugees. The Observatory will mainly include commissioning a comprehensive Population and Housing Census across Palestinian camps and gatherings, through a framework of collaboration between the Lebanese Central Administration for Statistics (CAS) and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS).

These two proposals received the full support of the new President as well as the new Prime Minister, the fact that ensures the stability of the LPDC strategies and workflow for 2014-2015.
2) **Outputs 2013 – 2015**

To achieve these objectives, the project “support to the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee- Phase 3” staged the following outputs:

- Output 1: LPDC inter-ministerial committee strengthened to implement its mandate; and the “Technical” and “Camp Management & Security” committees established and running;
- Output 2: LPDC acts as the focal point for national and international partners, on issues regarding Palestinian refugees in camps and surrounding communities, including the reconstruction of Nahr el Bared camp;
- Output 3: Policy and substantive advice provided to the inter-ministerial committee and the Government of Lebanon on Palestinian Refugees civil rights.

In this sense, key elements of the support to the LPDC President and the Government of Lebanon (GoL) included:

- Strengthening the provision of technical and policy advice to the Government of Lebanon and the LPDC, as a secretariat, with a clearer focus on legal reforms concerning the civil rights of Palestinian refugees;
- Strengthening the function of focal point of the LPDC within the Government of Lebanon for the Palestinian file, in order to work as an intermediary with Ministries to facilitate processes and resolve conflicts, as well as to act as a fire-fighter on issues being communicated by a wide range of stakeholders;
- Ensuring technical follow-up on matters related to the reconstruction of Nahr El Bared, in coordination with governmental counterparts, and with UNRWA;
- Building a knowledge base on the situation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, to devise evidence-based approaches to policy making, and to effectively support policy changes;
- Strengthening the communications aspect of the work of the LPDC allowing it to develop and implement a multi-actor and multi-level awareness-raising and outreach strategy;
- Strengthening the presence of the LPDC in relation to the all Palestinian camps in Lebanon, in order to gain a broader understanding of emerging issues and solve problematic situations.

3) **Executive Agency**

The Prime Minister’s Office/ Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC)/ is designated as the National Executing Agency for this project. The Executing Agency
is responsible for managing the project and provides overall support to achieving its intended outputs and results. Moreover, all services are provided in accordance with UNDP procedures, rules and regulations. The LPDC is responsible for and bound by any contracts signed by the UNDP, on behalf of the LPDC and upon its request, for the procurement of goods and services and / or recruitment of personnel for the programme.

III- PROGRESS

1) Output 1: LPDC inter-ministerial committee strengthened to implement its mandate; and the “Technical” and “Camp Management & Security” committees established and running

The meetings of the LPDC inter-ministerial committee have been suspended in 2013 due to the political/security context in the country and due to the modest and rather incomplete ministries representation which compromised the committee ability to influence decision-making. However, the LPDC president compensated this shortfall by meeting regularly with ministers, director generals’ and senior public officials’ in-charge of Palestinian affairs. This allowed the LPDC to outreach on more senior level and upscale its impact.

a) Technical Assistance to the Government of Lebanon (GoL)

In line with its on-going efforts to strengthen the capacity of member ministries and enhance cooperation, the LPDC inter-ministerial committee was reactivated in 2010. The idea was to form a task force between ministries to deal with any upcoming issue. Their role was to provide their input and contribution to solve problems. LPDC had to assume the role of “coordinator and interlocutor” linking UNRWA and other Palestinian actors to the relevant Lebanese ministries and administrations. Unfortunately, the representatives of the various ministries were not empowered with the needed authority to provide data or action. Hence, the inter-ministerial Committee’s meetings were held and the LPDC president and technical team assumed the coordination and interlocutor roles.

Moreover, towards the end of 2013 the PM has formed a National team under his chairmanship including the Minister of Interior, Director of General Security, Director of Central Administration of Statistics and the LPDC president. This team have met twice and focused on the measure needed to establish the National Observatory for Palestinian Affairs.

b) Capacity-building for the LPDC Team members

Building capacity for the LPDC team members is a strategic component that enabled LPDC to better respond to the refugee crisis, building on international experiences
and lessons learned from others parts of the world with similar conflicts. It aimed to develop specific areas in Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention to improve LPDC field team respond to conflict situation during their missions. Another area of development focused on the respond to humanitarian crisis like the PRS current crisis.

c) The LPDC Inter-ministerial Committee reinvigorated with a new appointment and mandate:

In February 2014, following the appointment of PM Salam, and the new LPDC Chairman, Dr Hassan Mneymneh, a series of meetings was held with the various ministries, since the previous members of the inter-ministerial committee were not re-appointed by the new ministers in charge. It has been agreed to resume the coordination meetings with newly appointed members to secure a network between the various directorate and ministries.

A preliminary meeting of the LPDC inter-ministerial committee was held on September 11 2014, at the Grand Serail, headed by Chairman Dr. Hassan Mneymneh, who stressed the “importance of implementing a joint coordination mechanism between LPDC and each ministry of the ministries concerned with Palestinian affairs to address the most significant issues that need to be dealt with in order to streamline all procedures and activate the Committee’s administrative work. The meeting was attended by representatives from the Ministries of Labor, Health, Defense, Interior and Social Affairs.

After a brief presentation on the overall functions of the inter-ministerial Committee and its work plan for the upcoming phase, conferees discussed a set of files to be followed up and given the necessary attention within each ministry. At the level of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the discussion focused on the impact of the recognition of the state of Palestine as an observer state; it has been decided to prepare a memorandum of understanding between UNRWA, the Government of Lebanon and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). Under the Ministry of Defense item, conferees discussed the expected administration to Nahr al-Bared camp and the mechanism for the access of building materials to the camps. On the level of the Ministry of Health, the debate tackled the issue of providing hospitalization services to the Palestinians in the public hospitals; they reviewed the agreement between UNRWA and the ministry. Regarding the Ministry of the Interior, a number of issues were reviewed, namely: the Non-IDs, the issuance of
passports to the Palestinians, the registration mechanism of Palestinian associations, procedures for recording the Palestinian displaced from Syria as well as issuing new identification cards for Palestinian refugees. With regard to the Ministry of Social Affairs, the related subject of the services offered by the ministry to the Palestinians coming from Syria was also discussed.

d) Networking with ministries:

- **Ministry of Justice**: 20 August 2014
  The LPDC Chairman, Dr Hassan Mneymneh, met the minister of Justice, Major General, Ashraf Rifi, in his office to discuss issues related to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. The discussion touched upon the right to transfer property ownership for those who bought property before the 2001 legal amendments and did not register their properties at the Land Registry Secretariat, in addition to the right to real estate inheritance.

  On another level, Rifi and Mneymneh examined the projects requiring an active cooperation between the Ministry and LPDC, including the preparation of a draft memorandum of understanding between the Lebanese government and UNRWA, as well as other projects benefitting both Lebanese and Palestinian communities and providing security and stability, at this delicate juncture.

- **Ministry of Interior and Municipalities**: July 11, 2014
  The minister of Interior and Municipalities, Nouhad el Machnouk, chaired a business meeting in his office at the MoIM to discuss key issues related to the Palestinian refugees, namely the Undocumented PR, the mechanism of issuing new documents and the renewal process, and the possible creation of a register in the two relevant directorates.

  The meeting was attended by LPDC chairman, Dr Hassan Mneymneh, the Director-General of the Political and Refugees Affairs, Faten Younis and the head of the Citizenship and Foreigners Passports office at the General Directorate of General Security, Brigadier Jamal Fadlallah. Mneymneh submitted to Machnouk a proposal to
discuss a possible registration of the Palestinian associations at the MoIM. The minister promised to examine the request.

The attendees tackled the issue of the Palestinian refugees displaced from Syria in an attempt to determine entry/exit criteria. They also discussed the humanitarian cases to reunite separated families that have fled to Lebanon from Syria and then returned home, the movement of Palestinian students between the two countries during exam seasons and birth registration problems for Palestinian refugees from Syria. He urged the Palestinians to settle their status at the soonest.

- **Ministry of Foreign Affairs:** LPDC will be in charge of preparing the next UPR report to be submitted by Lebanon for the review of its human rights track and progress. Building on the previous UPR report, submitted by LPDC, which has been praised during the last UPR session, it will seek to present a follow up on each item.

- **Ministry of Health:** LPDC is coordinating with the ministry to collect data and information on the recent steps and progress made between the MoH and UNRWA with regard to the medical coverage, hospitalisation services and medication administrated to chronic diseases.

2) **Output 2:** LPDC acts as the focal point for national and international partners on issues regarding Palestinian refugees in camps and surrounding communities, including the reconstruction of Nahr el Bared camp:

This output was the LPDC’s project main focus in 2013; it has been extended and developed throughout the year 2014 with other activities aiming at mobilizing support to resume the reconstruction process. It tried to breach in four tracks: First, towards the Palestinian Community and representatives by increasing the Field presence for the LPDC support team and resolving pertaining problems. Second, the LPDC president has been widely establishing communication with International and National stakeholders that works on the refugee issue. Third, he also exercised extended efforts to engage the public institutions chiefs and senior decision makers on the Palestinian context in Lebanon. Last, the LPDC established contact and knowledge of parallel institutions in other host countries as well as increasing its International exposure on the regional case of the Palestinian refugees through ADCOM meetings.

a) **Updating Donor Countries on Progress:**
- **Canadian Ambassador** to Lebanon, Hillary Child-Adams, and LPDC Chairman, Dr. Hassan Mneymneh, reviewed the most urgent issues related to the Palestinian that
need to be addressed to avoid further deterioration of the Palestinian refugees’ situation.

Dr Mneymneh detailed the required effort to move forward with the Nahr al-Bared reconstruction file with the appropriate momentum on both the medium and long terms. Mneymneh stressed the need to secure the necessary funding in order to help the displaced return to their homes because the deterioration of the living conditions and poverty would create a favorable environment for the emergence of terrorism, extremism and forms of social delinquency phenomena.

The discussion focused on the issue of the displaced Syrians and Palestinians coming from Syria and residing on the Lebanese territory and ways to help the Government of Lebanon in meeting their needs, especially with the ongoing Syrian crisis and its repercussions on Lebanon. Mneymneh noted that Lebanon cannot assume singlehandedly these heavy burdens. Hence, the international community has to take responsibility in supporting Lebanon, its bodies and institutions in all fields.

b) LPDC Support for EU Funded Socio-Economic Development Projects

26 June 2104 - Within the frame of the project "Improving the Living Conditions of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon", funded by the European Union and implemented by UNRWA in collaboration with the "Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee" (LPDC), over a three-year period, the Agency organized a workshop in "Siblin Training Center", North campus, (Nahr el Bared Camp), to present the progress made on the implementation level in vital areas. Attending the workshop were representatives of various agencies, local and international NGOs, Palestinian civil society and stakeholders.

The UNRWA team explained the most important areas of intervention covered by the program:

First, insuring the provision of mental health and psychosocial support services to Palestinian refugees in all the camps by a specialized staff, in parallel with the establishment of a referral mechanism inside and outside the UNRWA health centres, in partnership with the German Agency for International Cooperation and UNICEF;

Second, securing loans for young Palestinian refugees to expand self-employment opportunities and business expansion: Microcredit Community Support loans;

Third, improving education, technical and vocational training to increase employment opportunities and promote social inclusion among young Palestinian refugees, as well as setting up recreational and sport clubs.
for college Siblin Training Centre graduates, in addition to the implementation of activities to promote understanding and concord between the Palestinian refugees and Lebanese society, in an effort to improve the social integration and synergy between the two communities;

Fourth, upgrading environmental health conditions by rehabilitating the infrastructure in the framework of the "Spring" project that has been launched in the Southern package (Ain el Helwe camp) at the level of water supply, drainage systems, sewage and roads rehabilitation;

Fifth, strengthening the participatory mechanisms to promote local and national engagement and support the decision-making process related to the preparation of a comprehensive action plan and its implementation. This is carried out in consultation with the Popular Committees and sectors’ commissions. The focus groups are appointed to discuss and follow up on the project’s progress and its impact, with a particular attention given to women, youth and disabled.

These activities are conducted in coordination with key national stakeholders, through the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee that contributes in facilitating the administrative procedures coordinating the logistics between the various ministries. LPDC is also seeking to move at the international level to secure international support for the UNRWA’s activities, as explained by the LPDC representative, Lina Hamdan, who noted the importance of the coordination between the LPDC, UNRWA and NGOs.

c) Strengthening Cooperation and collaboration with the Palestinian Partner:

➢ Democratic Front to follow up on the reconstruction of Nahr al-Bared

The LPDC Chairman, Dr Hassan Mneymneh, met with representatives from the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) headed by Ali Faisal to discuss some issues affecting the living conditions of Palestinian refugees. The DFLP delegation handed the LPDC Chairman a memorandum including the most vital points liable to be a gateway to improve the situation on the ground, namely following up on the reconstruction process of Nahr al-Bared camp, facilitating the administrative procedures at the DPRA within the Ministry of Interior, chiefly the automation of issuing ID and personal status documents and passports, as well as granting some syndicate, political and media freedoms.
Dr Mneymneh listened to the needs and discussed the elements pointed out in the memorandum, especially those that are being dealt with and are in the following up pipeline with the various officials. He made some remarks about a possible progress should everyone cooperate to overcome the obstacles and continue on the path of cooperation and coordination.

**Witness:** The Palestinian Association for Human Rights (Witness) met LPDc chairman to hand him the annual report on the "Reality of the Rights of Refugees in Lebanon in 2013," especially the issue of the displaced from Syria, the Undocumented Refugees (Non-IDs), the human and social rights and the resumption of the reconstruction of Nahr al-Bared. The discussion touched upon the practical steps to be taken to ensure the settlement of some outstanding problems in the Lebanese institutions and administrations.

Dr. Mneymneh expressed his readiness to move forward with some outstanding issues and submit them to the competent authorities, in an attempt to re-position the Palestinian issue on the top of the priorities in the light of drawback resulting from the Syrian crisis.

**Embassy of Palestine**

Regular meetings and consultations are constantly taking place and at various occasions to update the embassy and coordinate at the official level. The coordination with the embassy had many positive repercussions on the administrative and international level in simplifying the administrative procedures and supporting the stance of Palestine in international

LPDC Chairman, Dr Hassan Mneymneh met with the Ambassador of Palestine, Ashraf Dabbour, on the occasion of his recent appointment. They both reviewed all the challenges and difficulties hindering the cooperation and coordination process between LPDC and the embassy, highlighting the urgent issues that must be addressed in order to achieve further progress on the Lebanese-Palestinian relations level.

Dr Mneymneh and Ambassador Dabbour agreed on a set of actions expected to be
implemented at the earliest convenience in order to dispel worries and enhance mutual cooperation for the best interest of both the Lebanese and Palestinian communities.

- **Popular Committees and Representatives of Palestinian Refugees**

  July 11, 2014: Upon his appointment at the helm of the LPDC, Dr. Hassan Mneymneh, sought to gather Palestinian representatives to explore cooperation possibilities and means to respond to the aggression against Gaza.

  LPDC hosted a meeting at the Grand Serail gathering the Ambassador of Palestine and representatives of the Palestinian factions, to discuss means to facing the Israeli barbaric attack on Gaza and the Palestinian territories. Concluding the meeting, the participants issued a statement reproving the Zionist aggression against Gaza strip and pointing to the conspiracy targeting the Palestinian cause and aiming at writing off the achievements at the international level and at the local level translated in the Palestinian national unity represented by the Palestinian Government of Reconciliation.

- With the aim of strengthening relations with the Palestinian refugee communities in Lebanon, the LPDC under the presidency Dr. Khaldoun el Charif, carried out a number of Coordination Meetings with representatives of the various Palestinian Factions.

  LPDC’s President, Khaldoun, also met with various Palestinian factions, to discuss setting mechanisms of coordination. He invited the various representatives to attend the workshops aimed at presenting the draft of an official policy for Lebanon towards the Palestinian presence on Lebanese territory. There was a common agreement on the challenges that are facing Lebanon at this delicate juncture of regional and international turmoil and the need to join efforts to come up with a new insight for a future collaboration that would secure the stability
of Lebanon and a better living environment for the Palestinian refugees inside and outside the camps.

➢ Seeking to deal with the Influx of Palestinian Refugees coming from Syria

LPDC’s president, Dr. Khaldoun el Charif, met with representatives of the Beddawi Popular Committee to discuss issues related to the displaced Palestinian refugees those coming from Syria as well as those coming from Nahr el Bared and residing in Beddawi since 2007. The participants set up a Road Map to follow up on the Camps’ situation and coordinate efforts to deal with the arising problems. The LPDC president also coordinated the efforts between the Director General of Security General and UNRWA to ensure the resolve border access issues and recommended the automatic renewal of PRS temporary residency. He remained a strong supporter and advocated strongly to maintain the border accessible for PRS as well as to Syrian refugees.

d) LPDC’s role as the Focal Point for National Partners:

➢ Mneymneh Calls on the International Community to Set Up Temporary Camps in Safe Syrian Territory for the Displaced Palestine Refugees

Meeting with UNRWA’s Deputy Commissioner, Margot Ellis, and the country Director in Lebanon, Ann Desmore, at the Grand Serail. LPDC Chairman, Dr. Hassan Mneymneh confirmed that the international community should fully assume its role as the custodian ensuring the safety, security and assistance to the Palestinian refugees. This role will never be fulfilled without an imperative establishment of temporary camps in safe Syrian territory. Mneymneh explained that "the number of refugees in Lebanon amounts to nearly half the Lebanese population; this is an unprecedented phenomena worldwide. It has become impossible for all the departments of the Lebanese state and its organs to organize these numbers and provide the necessary assistance, which outweigh its capacity to handle the situation."

LPDC Chairman called upon the UN Security Council to establish temporary camps in safe areas inside Syrian territory to accommodate the large number of Palestinian refugees who enjoy international protection for decades. Mneymneh said, "The Security Council has already taken a decision to set up safe corridors to deliver the UN assistance for the displaced in their places of residence; the procedure must be completed by establishing temporary camps for the displaced Palestine refugees inside Syrian territory."
UNRWA Director Discusses the issue of Palestinian Refugees from Syria
February, 2013—UNRWA Lebanon Director, Ann Dismorr, and LPDC technical team held a coordination meeting at the Grand Serail with the various local and international NGOs working towards improving the living conditions in Palestinian gatherings in terms of improving services, infrastructure, shelter and residential units’ rehabilitation.

The participants reviewed the ongoing projects seeking to set up a coordination mechanism for future projects and programs, mapping them within the frame of a database that would serve as a platform for any potential outlook. The LPDC continuously organized the activities of the gathering working group which meets on bimonthly basis.

LPDC Calls upon UNRWA to Re-examine its Termination of the “Emergency Program” in NBC
Dr. Khaldoun el Charif, called upon the Director of UNRWA affairs, Ann Dismorr, to reassess UNRWA’s decision to terminate the “emergency program” in the Nahr el Bared refugees’ camp in North Lebanon, namely the allocations dedicated to the chronic diseases cases. El Charif stressed in a dispatch the inappropriate termination related to these vital allocations that supports the living conditions, urging the UNRWA director to take all the needed measures to restore these provisions.

Regional and international coordination
In an effort to maintain contact with the donor community, the LPDC has been actively engaged with the UNRWA through the monthly donors update meetings organized by the UN organization. Using UNRWA’s monthly meetings as a platform, the LPDC has been able to update donor countries on its latest news, as well as highlight areas that require further attention with relation to NBC reconstruction and the existing funding gap. The role played by the Lebanese delegation attempted to mediate between UNRWA, the donor and host countries with regards to UNRWA reformation efforts and its Midterm strategy.

c) Working with the International Community:

UNRWA/ADCOM sub-committee Meeting June 2014 in Jordan: Lebanon chairing the session
The UNRWA Advisory Commission (AdCom) semi-annual meeting (16-17 June) chaired by the President of the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC), Dr. Hassan Mneymneh, has concluded the work of the regular session by reviewing reports submitted by the competent authorities about UNRWA’s financial situation, namely the shortfall between income and increasing expenses in its operations. The participants stressed the importance of attracting new donor countries urging the
current donors to increase their support to secure the minimal requirements for the work of the Agency.

During the session, several delegations from host and donor countries took the floor commending the newly appointed Commissioner-General, Pierre Krähenbühl’s quest to secure new sources of funding for projects and budgetary support. They also stressed the need to provide the necessary funds to complete the reconstruction of the Nahr al-Bared refugees’ camp in North Lebanon; a topic that has been repeatedly put forth by the Lebanese delegation. In addition to providing the necessary support to help Lebanon facing the repercussions of the waves of displacement due to the Syrian crisis was a focal point on the AdCom agenda.

The AdCom Chair, former minister Hassan Mneymneh made an address, commending the “strategic planning and implementation of the UNRWA MTS 2016-2021 (Medium Term Strategy).”

➢ UK Ambassador Stresses Continued Support to the LPDC and GoL

June 5, 2014- UK Ambassador, Tom Fletcher, met with the newly appointed LPDC Chairman, Dr. Hassan Mneymneh, to express his country’s continuous support to the efforts exerted by the Government of Lebanon in assisting the Palestinian refugees, especially in light of the ongoing displacements due to the Syrian crisis.

“The UK remains one of the largest donors to UNRWA’s General Fund contributing US $12,424,798 in 2013 to 2014. We are also delivering food parcels and essential household items to Palestinian refugees from Syria, through additional support to UNRWA in Lebanon. We look forward to working with Dr Mneymneh to contribute to improving the
living and humanitarian conditions of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon” stressed the British ambassador.

Dr Mneymneh outlined the LPDC strategy for the next phase, based on three basic themes: establishing the Higher Commission for Palestinian Refugees Affairs, setting up the National Observatory within the LPDC and securing the necessary funds to complete the reconstruction of Nahr al-Bared camp in cooperation with UNRWA.

➢ Swiss Ambassador, Ruth Flint, at the LPDC

The newly appointed LPDC Chairman, former minister Dr Hassan Mneymneh, met with the Swiss Ambassador Ruth Flint, who was accompanied by the head of the Swiss agency for Development and Cooperation, Mrs. Hiba Haj Felder and her assistant Mr. Robert Nicolas.

The discussion focused on the strategy for the next phase, based on three basic themes: establishing the Higher Commission for Palestinian Refugees, setting up the National Observatory within LPDC and completing the funding of the reconstruction of Nahr al-Bared refugees camp in cooperation with the Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).

The discussion also touched upon the efforts required to move forward with the Reconstruction process of the Nahr el Bared refugees’ camp with the needed momentum on both the medium and long terms. The participants reviewed the projects implemented by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SADC) in the Palestinian refugees’ camps in general, especially the reverse osmosis water plant for the treatment and desalination of drinking water in and the project “Cash for self-help shelter rehabilitation”. The Swiss Ambassador stressed the need to keep the Palestinian issue on the agenda of the Lebanese government, despite the prevailing difficult political conditions.

➢ Canadian Ambassador discusses issses related to the PRS

July 8, 2014- Canadian Ambassador to Lebanon Hillary Child-Adams reviewed with LPDC Chairman, Dr. Hassan Mneymneh, the latest local and regional developments, namely the Palestinian refugees’ issue.
Mneymneh stressed the most urgent issues that need to be addressed to avoid further deterioration of the Palestinian refugees’ situation, detailing the required effort to move forward with the Nahr al-Bared reconstruction file. The discussion focused on the issue of the displaced Syrians and Palestinians coming from Syria and residing on the Lebanese territory and ways to help the Government of Lebanon in meeting their needs.

➤ **LPDC at UNRWA’s Water Plant Ground Breaking Ceremony Funded by Switzerland**

The ground-breaking ceremony of the reverse osmosis water plant was held in the School of Capri at Mar Elias camp, upon the invitation of the UNRWA and in the presence of the newly appointed UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl. The plant falls within the framework of the "Rehabilitation of Water supply systems” project; it will cater for more than 70,000 Palestine refugees gathered in 7 camps in Lebanon, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

Ambassador Flinth explained: “The project is the first plant using the reverse osmosis technology, based on the desalination of water while ensuring quality. The communities are expected to assume an important role by participating in the implementation and management through the Water Commission. On the financial level, the project is designed to ensure that the operational and maintenance fees will be covered by the tariffs: $20 per household to get clean water is less expensive than continuing to buy water.”

The ceremony took place in the presence of the Palestine Ambassador, Ashraf Dabbour; Swiss Ambassador, Ruth Flint; the representative of the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC), Lina Hamdan; Director of UNRWA, Ann Desmore; representatives of the Palestinian factions and the Alliance Forces, representative of the Popular Committees, Abu Iyad Shaalan, the camp director and a crowd of UNRWA staff and camp's residents.

➤ **LPDC at the Ground Breaking Ceremony of the EU-Funded Siblin Training Center Stadium**
The EU-funded Siblin Training Center Stadium was inaugurated in the presence of the EU head of delegation, Angelina Eichhorst, the Ambassador of Palestine, H.E. M Ashraf Dabbour, UNRWA director Ann Desmore and LPDC representative, Lina Hamdan. The ceremony featured a friendly football game between EU staff members and their fellow Palestinian trainers and coaches. A folkloric Palestinian dance and songs marked the launching of the event.

**LPDC at the Palestiniadi Games at Siblin Training Center**

25 April, 2014: Hosted by UNRWA, the UNICEF-sponsored Palestiniadi games, held the opening ceremony in the newly renovated stadium of the Siblin Training Center. The ceremony was attended by UNRWA director, Ann Desmore, UNICEF representative, LPDC representative, Lina Hamdan and eminent Palestinian leaders. Desmore announced the launching of the games that started after a traditional dance performed by the Palestinian youth. The various teams coming from all parts of Lebanon competed in football, volleyball, basketball and chess.

**UNRWA/ADCOM Sub-Committee Meeting /April, 2013, Amman, Jordan**

*The Action of the Lebanese Government is Far Beyond its Capacity*/ Khaldoun el Charif, head of the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC) called the donor countries “to assume their responsibilities in shoring up Lebanon and the international agencies and organization in charge of supporting the displaced to help them undertake their tasks, he stressed the positive role of UNRWA, despite the scarcity of its resources and considered that the action of the Lebanese government was far beyond its capacity.

El Charif’s statement was issued in the frame of the UNRWA Advisory Sub-committee meeting held in Amman, Jordan, including representatives of Palestinian refugees host countries, donors and international community representatives. During the meeting, El Charif presented an overview of both the Lebanese and Palestinian and Syrian displaced hardship, calling upon all parties to share this burden. LPDC’s head paid attention to the statements of the donor countries representatives who expressed goodwill and sincere readiness to assume a more efficient role that will
gradually materialize in the coming phase. Agreement was reached on resuming contacts and follow up to secure a good coordination on all levels.

- **UN Special Coordinator, Derek Plumbly, Discusses Refugees issue**
  UN Special Coordinator, Derek Plumbly, met several times with Khaldoun el Charif, to discuss the situation of the displaced Syrians and Palestinians on Lebanese territory and means to bolster the international support to cater for their urgent needs.
  The discussions tackled the issue of the Undocumented Palestinians (Non-IDs), the fruitful collaboration with the Lebanese Security General apparatus in this regard, and matters related to the displaced. Plumbly updated el Charif on many steps undertaken by the international community and the positive implications for Lebanon.

- **Canada Supports a Proposal to Cater for Palestinians**
  The Canadian Ambassador to Lebanon, Mrs. Hilary Childs-Adams discussed at many occasions with Dr. Khaldoun el Sharif the latest local and regional developments, especially the refugees’ issue, touching upon means to support the Lebanese Government in drafting a proposal to cater for Palestinian Refugees affairs in Lebanon. Childs-Adams updated el Charif on the international efforts to contain any negative repercussions of the Syrian crisis on the Lebanese situation, reiterating the need to support Lebanon at this juncture.

- **Norway at the Forefront of the Relief and Development Efforts**
  LPDC held a series of meetings with the Norwegian Ambassador to Lebanon, Svein Aass, who said that “Norway has a tradition of doing what it can in response to major international refugee crises and of providing a safe haven for refugees.” He praised Lebanon for the shelter provided to Palestinian and Syrian refugees, “Lebanon has displayed an enormous sense of responsibility within its limited capacities, it is therefore crucial that Norway and other like-minded countries show solidarity.” Supporting LPDC is included in the Norwegian embassy’s agenda, especially in projects related to development and youngster empowerment.

Since the start of the conflict in Syria in 2011, Norway has provided a total of NOK 850 million (145 million USD) in humanitarian aid to Syria and neighboring countries. Also, the Government decided recently to accept 1 000 Syrian refugees for
resettlement to Norway. The Norway remains as well one of the LPDC project main donors in 2013 and 2014.

- **Swiss Ambassador** Swiss Ambassador, Ruth Flint, being the LPDC largest donor, through SDC, discusses Switzerland support to Development Projects and the major challenges facing LPDC and the efforts exerted by LPDC to achieve progress on various fronts.

- **Japan Supports the Rehabilitation of an Infrastructure Project in Ain el Helwe and discusses the situation of the Displaced**
  LPDC president, Dr. Khaledoun el Charif, discussed with the Japanese Ambassador to Lebanon, Tokumitsu Murakami, the implementation of the Japanese assistance previously granted through JICA (Japanese International Cooperation Agency) and allocated to rehabilitate the first phase of the sewage network upgrading in Ain el Helweh camp. LPDC assumed the follow up action on the Japanese grant to remove any hurdle hindering its implementation. The Japanese ambassador updated El Charif on the implementation stages of the Ain el Helweh Sewage network rehabilitation.
  The Japanese Ambassador and LPDC’s president examined the situation of the displaced on Lebanese territory, namely the Palestinian displaced coming from Syria.

- **Austria Seeks to Support the Displaced**
  The Austrian Ambassador to Lebanon, Ursula Fahringer, conveyed Austria’s readiness to support Palestinian and Syrian displaced residing on Lebanese territory.

- **Belgian Ambassador and el Charif Discuss the Situation in Ain el Helwe camp/**
  The Ambassador of Belgium, Colette Taquet, visited the LPDC’s headquarters to set up cooperation mechanisms aiming at alleviating tensions and soothing off the climate in the southern camps in general, namely in Ain el Helwe, placing it as a top priority for LPDC in the upcoming stage.

- **Danish Ambassador, Jan Top Christensen, leading the drive to mobilize funds to support Palestinian Refugees projects:** Ambassador Christensen pledged support to LPDC in implementing its mandate.

- **Romanian Ambassador, Daniel Tanase, met with LPDC’s head to discuss matters related to the situation of Palestinian refugees and means of cooperation in**
light of the previous contribution of Romania within the frame of the donor countries.

- **US Ambassador and LPDC’s president to Improve Living conditions of Palestinian Refugees.**
  LPDC president and US Ambassador, Maura Connelly, agreed on enhancing cooperation aiming at improving the living conditions of Palestinian refugees on Lebanese territory. The discussion tackled the situation in and around the camps and the stages already completed in the NBC reconstruction, stressing the need to resume the funding drive by urging the donor parties that took part to the Vienna conference, to honour their pledges and find new funding sources.

- **Australian Ambassador, Lex Bartlem,** announced that Australia allocated 90 m USD to assist Palestinian refugees for the next 5 years.

- **UK Ambassador, Tom Fletcher,** discussed means to alleviate tension. Heading a British delegation, the UK Ambassador conveyed his country’s readiness to provide assistance to several programs aimed at empowering Palestinian youth and setting up mechanisms of cooperation to alleviate tension in the camps.

- **Ambassador of Finland meeting el Charif:** Finnish ambassador Kari Kahluoto met LPDC president to discuss means of supporting the actions and programs targeting Palestinian refugees.

**f) Nahr el-Bared reconstruction:**

LPDC support team; since the dismantle of the RRC (Reconstruction and Relief Cell) at the Prime Minister Office; has been leading the coordination and facilitation role on behalf of the GoL and worked closely with the concerned public institutions and UNRWA to overcome the bureaucratic delays regarding reconstruction programing.

In camp Adjacent Areas, with support from CDR and Palestinian Embassy, LPDC reactivated and mobilized the reconstruction/rehabilitation works in Al-muhajareen Project, the Italian Grant (Phase two) and the Greek Grant for infrastructure.

- **Italian Grant for rehabilitation Phase 1-2**
  Towards the end of 2012, the completion of works of the first phase Italian grant was still pending due to disputes and claims between the contractors and the Central Funds for Displaced CFD and Council of Development and Reconstruction CDR.
The LPDC with support of the Italian Embassy facilitated the resolution of all claims of the first phase and launching the second phase incorporating lessons learned.

- **Greek Grant for infrastructure**
  This grant was pending at the CDR for more than 3 years in result of lack of coordination among stakeholders. LPDC with the support of the Palestine Embassy and technical support from UNRWA initiated a project to divert the initial proposal into a local community project. CDR has adopted the project and receives the approval of Greece Embassy and currently under tender.

- **Fundraising mobilization**
  The LPDC and PMO continue to support UNRWA’s effort to fundraise the NBC reconstruction project. Knowing the current fundraising challenges, the PM has drafted support letters that were disseminated across the Gulf region to highlight the commitment of the GOL to the reconstruction of the NBC and the return of its refuges.

**g) Extending Partnerships:**

- **LPDC Sponsors the Launching Ceremony of an Analytical Study Assessing the Needs in Palestinian Gatherings Host Communities in Lebanon**
  August 12, 2014- Sponsored by the LPDC, chaired by Dr. Hassan Mneymneh, the launching ceremony of the report “Profiling Deprivation”, an analytical study assessing the needs of Palestinian host communities in Lebanon, undertaken by the UNDP and UN-HABITAT and funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (ASDC) with the support of the German Government, the US Government through the Office of Population, Refugees and Migration, the Government of Japan and the Fund for Emergency Funding affiliated to UN Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs.

  The implementation process of the recommendations stemming from the study falls within the “Improving Living Conditions of Palestinian Communities in Lebanon” project. The latter will be jointly implemented by both UNDP and UN-HABITAT; it will meet the needs of some 110,000 Palestinian dwellers and an additional 30,000 Palestinian and Syrian displaced of the most marginalized population residing in these gatherings. The program would also promote access to some of the basic urban
services, as it would improve shelter conditions in the 42 gatherings spread throughout the Lebanese territory.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of the LPDC Chairman, Dr. Hassan Mneymneh; with the participation of the ambassador to Palestine, Ashraf Dabbour, the Ambassador of Switzerland, Ruth Flint, the UN Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs and UNDP Resident Representative, Ross Mountain, the director of UNRWA Ann Dismorr, and the ambassadors of Turkey, Mexico, Austria; representatives of the embassies of Germany, Japan, Britain, United States and the European Union and UN agencies concerned with refugees, as well as academics and representatives of Lebanese and Palestinian NGOs.

During the event, a presentation demonstrated the most important findings of the study and the proposed mechanisms for a direct implementation in cooperation with the adjacent municipalities, service providers - electricity, water, sanitation, solid waste management and other services- that would help improving the dwellers living conditions.

The study, which was based on field reports and meetings with municipalities, service providers and local organizations and dwellers representatives, generated several recommendations, notably: the need to rehabilitate housing units unfit for dwelling and liable to collapse, especially by replacing walls and ceilings made of zinc by non-contaminating and environment-friendly material; securing drinking clean and unpolluted water and the safe separation of drinking water systems from sewage networks; rehabilitation of sewage networks for public safety; providing dwellers with electricity on a regular basis and securing maintenance; developing an efficient system for solid waste management, while replacing open waste containers by closed one to prevent air pollution; rehabilitating the road network.

These projects will be implemented in cooperation with the Popular Committees and adjacent municipalities via cooperation mechanisms providing services in exchange of well-studied tariffs. The recommendations included the sectors of health, education and vocational centers, as well as children and young programs and securing access to the labor market.

-Sealed Partnership LPDC/Common Space Initiative via a Memorandum of Understanding

The Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC) and Common Space Initiative (CSI) held a launching event at the Grand Serail to seal a Memorandum of Understanding initiating an inclusive dialogue forum where a group of experts will discuss, exchange, and develop a common understanding on the Lebanese-Palestinian
relations and provide advice and support to all formal and non-formal entities working on the Lebanese-Palestinian dialogue and Palestinian refugees’ issues.

The Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Forum Review: CSI and LPDC have been working on evaluating and reviewing CSI support services to the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Forum. Several additional resources and tools to respond to the forums’ needs and issues were developed. Meetings and Forums: CSI and LPDC held meetings with heads of Palestinian syndicates, facilitation meetings and The Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Forums.

h) Meetings to deal with the influx of Palestinian refugees coming from Syria
Several emergency meetings were held at the Grand Serail between the head of LPDC and Representatives of All Palestinian Factions, some were headed by the minister of Social affairs, Wael Abou Faour, to stress the Government of Lebanon resolve to exert all efforts locally and internationally to face the problematic issues stemming from the influx of Palestinian refugees coming from Syria, especially after the recent developments in Yarmouk camp.

The representatives of the Palestinian factions underlined the need to deal with the Palestinian refugees “on a par and according to the same standards applied to Syrian refugees”, while taking into consideration that UNRWA should assume the responsibility of the basic services aimed at accommodating them temporarily until they return to Syria.

Discussions focused on the main outcome of the UNRWA study related to the expected number of Palestinian refugees who are liable to enter all neighboring countries, including Lebanon during the next six months. The study was submitted to the concerned international parties in Geneva in the frame of a work meeting aimed at discussing means of supporting the relief efforts. LPDC will lead on the plans to secure funding and relief programs until they safely regain their homes.

3) Output 3: Policy and substantive advice provided to the inter-ministerial committee and the Government of Lebanon on Palestinian Refugees civil rights
As part of the work that the LPDC carried out for the purpose of providing the GoL with substantive advice, the technical support team attended several workshops, meetings and conferences with aiming at enhancing and sharing its knowledge base on the human rights of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Moreover, the LPDC led on a number initiative pertaining to Palestinian refugees human rights, namely:

a) The EU funded center for work and improvement of the social protection for Palestinian refugees launched by CEP, ILO and LPDC
LPDC took part to the launching ceremony of the centre dedicated for work and improvement of the social protection for Palestinian refugees (R-CEP) which is
funded by the European Union and overseen by the CEP and the International Labour Organization (ILO) in collaboration with the UNRWA and the LPDC. The ceremony was attended by LPDC Chairman, Dr Hassan Mneymneh, Head of the European Union Delegation, Angelina Eichhorst, Director of the ILO, Nada El Nashef, Director of UNRWA, Ann Dismorr, CEP Chairman, Ambassador Samir Khoury, and a crowd of Palestinian and Lebanese NGOs representatives.

The presentation included material and output related to improving employment opportunities and social protection for the Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon. Reports and studies were presented, as well as a policy brief on the challenges and recommendations based on accurate numbers and statistics related to the Palestinian workforce and situation.

Mneymneh urged the Minister of Labour to issue the implementation decrees of the related legislations dealing with the right to work for the Palestinians, as soon as possible and according to the requirements of the Lebanese labour market, while respecting the specific characteristics of Palestinian refugees on the Lebanese territory.

The seminar was concluded by a series of recommendations, namely the need to remove the legal hurdles to avoid the illegal employment of Palestinians and adjust the prejudice in collecting the social security contributions: they should pay 8% (as a contribution for the end-of-service benefit) instead of the 23% (since they don’t benefit from the maternity and medical provisions), in addition to facilitating their entry to to the professions ruled by unions, like the Nursing Union allowing the work of Palestinians.

b) The Protection of Children from the Sequels of Conflict and Armed Violence sponsored by LPDC

June 26, 2014: In cooperation with the "Geneva Call" Association, LPDC hosted a panel discussion, at the Grand Serail, to follow up on the implementation of the joint Declaration of the PLO Factions and Palestinian National Coalition Forces in Lebanon on protecting children from the repercussions of conflict and armed violence." The Swiss organization deals with the protection of civilians in armed conflicts.
The LPDC Chairman, Dr. Hassan Mneymneh, headed the session stressing “the commitment of the Lebanese government to respect all the covenants and conventions on human rights, especially those that ensure the protection and security of the children’s lives.”

Mneymneh addressed all Palestinian factions, urging them to "respect the privacy of Palestinian children and to monitor all violations, in collaboration with the Lebanese army and security forces". He underlined the guidance and the media role on the level of decision-makers and political leaders at the political mobilization level and its outcomes. The LPDC Chairman noted the need to promote awareness and training on alert mechanisms to report cases of children affected by conflict and armed violence and rehabilitate the victims of these conflicts, especially children."

The Secretary General of the Higher Council for Childhood, Mrs. Rita Karam, provided an overview about the Council, indicating that it has been agreed to form a national committee to develop a plan to work with all parties concerned to protect children from armed conflicts.

c) **Right of Palestinian Refugees to Form Associations**

In Lebanon, associations are regulated by the law dated 1909, later completed by the law dated 1962. According to these two laws, associations may be created freely, in addition to the condition that “any association under construction must send a notification announcement to the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities”. Despite the fact that this law did not distinguish between citizens and foreigners, the Law no. 369 LR dated 1939 stipulates that foreigner associations should have a prior permission that must be issued by a special governmental decree. By including the principle of reciprocity as a condition precedent, the Palestinians are deprived from the right to establish associations. Moreover, this regulation was complemented by the law No. 629 dated 2004, which concerns the “Organization of the Ministry of Youth and Sports”. This law requires that founders of associations should be Lebanese over eighteen years old.

In this regard, within the scope of the LPDCs’ work, LPDC has conducted a legal consultancy with the anticipated following results:
Policy paper highlighting key issues regarding the provision of the right to form associations to Palestinian refugees.

Mapping national constitutional, legal and policy frameworks and ratified international conventions concerning the right of Palestinian refugees to form associations in Lebanon.

Analytical report identifying the gaps between the local legal framework and provisions of the ratified international conventions regarding the issue;

Analytical report identifying the projects/activities/programs carried out in Lebanon related to the “right of Palestinian refugees to form association” sector, possible progress and areas of synergies;

National assessment of the current situation of the Palestinian or Lebanese-Palestinian organizations existing in the Lebanese territories.

A proposal of an amendment of the Lebanese implementation procedure pertaining to Association law;

Synthesis executive report identifying the major issues, gaps and challenges, priorities and policy suggestions’ directions in relation to the legal policy to be taken by the LPDC with regard to this issue.

The study has been finalized and delivered to LPDC. A conference was organized with the DPRA to present the outcome in August 2013 to present the outcome.

d) LPDC participation in Events, Seminars and Conferences hosted by Partners and Stakeholders

- The Right to Work Coalition conference: LPDC participated to “the right to work for Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon” conference prepared by the right to work Coalition and IFI under the supervision of Dr. Sawsan Abdel Rahim and Dr. Aziza El Khalidi.

- The ILO "Connectivity with Employers" workshop was held on February 2013: prepared by the ILO in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture of Beirut and Mount Lebanon.


- Seminar on “the Situation facing Palestinian Refugees in regard to the Ban on Real Estate Ownership in Lebanon” by NRC.
ICLA Seminar on the Norwegian Refugee Council’s project on the situation facing Palestinian Refugees regarding the ban on real estate ownership in Lebanon with a discussion moderated by Dr. Khalil Al Dahdah.

NRC training on “Housing, Land and Property”: a two-day training conducted by advisors from Oslo related to Housing, Land and Property rights for Palestinian Refugees.

The CEP Plenary/Strategic Retreat: an informal open discussion that will pave the way for Concrete Decisions that will be ironed out and consensually adopted at follow-up meeting: Vision, Mission and Goals.

e) LPDC –CSI Labor guide: Labor rights of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon

The Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC) and Common Space Initiative (CSI) initiated an inclusive dialogue forum and expert group to discuss, exchange, and develop common understanding on the Lebanese-Palestinian relations and provide advice and support to all formal and non-formal entities working on the Lebanese-Palestinian dialogue and Palestinian refugees’ issues.

LPDC participated in drafting a guide describing the profile of employment conditions of Palestinians refugees in Lebanon. This guide provides a selective bibliography and knowledge resources on Palestinian Refugees Labor Rights in Lebanon. It constitutes a platform for ongoing knowledge sharing and accumulation around the stated issue.

f) Study on the Palestine State

The LPDC is conducting a study to identify the implications of the recognition by the United Nations General Assembly of ‘Palestine’ as a non-member observer state on the current status of Palestinians in Lebanon. The purpose of the study is to improve the Lebanese legal system by adapting it to the recent changes produced by the impact of the recognition of Palestine as non-member observer state at the UN on the Lebanese legal regulatory framework pertaining to the General Clause of Reciprocity applied on Palestinian Refugees.

The Terms of Reference has been prepared (Annex 1) and published and the expert has been chosen. It is expected to finalize the study by the end of May 2014.
IV- MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS 2013- 2014

1) Actions and Positions Supporting Palestine and the Palestinian Cause:

a) LPDC Campaign to Support Gaza:
The random and ruthless killing in the various parts of the Gaza Strip by the Israeli forces and the methodic destruction of public facilities and private properties was the main trigger for the LPDC Chairman, Dr Hassan Mneymneh to respond by launching the “Gaza Support Campaign” sponsored by the LPDC, during a press conference held at the grand Serail.

A bank account has been dedicated to receive donations from the various Lebanese institutions and associations in support for the Gaza resident facing the aggressive attack that claimed lives, houses and public units, despite the prevailing uncertainty in Lebanon in the economic sectors and among people.

“You Support will break the Devastated Gaza Blockade”
LPDC’s fundraising campaign to support Gaza
Account: 755031191
Banque du Liban

b) Call to Arab and International Communities to Stop the Aggression against Gaza
The LPDC Chairman, Dr Hassan Mneymneh, urged the United Nations and the international community to move very quickly to stop the Israeli onslaught against the Gaza strip. He warned from a potential disaster that would engulf the Gaza strip’s cities and camps and reach various human, living, health and security levels.

Mneymneh stressed that many living facilities were destroyed, while the infrastructure that was already suffering from a severe deficit and deficiency due to poverty and the Israeli blockade, faced deterioration in the standard of living and scarcity of precarious services. He urged the international bodies and organizations to assist the Palestinian people in this ordeal, calling upon the League of Arab States, the European Union and the United Nations “to put pressure on Israel to stop the destruction and blatant aggression which sets fire to innocent people inflicting injuries and wounds that will never heal.”
c) Call to safeguard al Aqsa Mosque from Judaization

LPDC Chairman, Dr. Hassan Mneymneh, issued a statement exposing the increased aggressions against Al-Aqsa Mosque by Israel's attempts to impose Israeli sovereignty and confiscate it from the Palestinian people. Mneymneh explained: “The repeated attempts to prevent the Muslims from praying in Al Aqsa and to restrict daily access, especially on Friday of each week, in addition to the increased access of settlers groups is just a step in a comprehensive Israeli effort of integration.”

Mneymneh observed that, “These actions are benefitting from the silence of the international, Arab and Islamic world that left Al-Aqsa Mosque alone facing this fierce campaign. This action is undertaken while a policy of ignoring what is happening in the city of Jerusalem is being applied; the Judaization operations and pressure imposed on Muslims and Christians are aimed at expelling them to open the door to settlers. Judaizing the city falls within an integrated policy aimed at finally annexing the so-called eternal capital of the State of Israel.”

Mneymneh concluded by urging “the Arab League, the Islamic Conference, the United Nations and UNESCO to move quickly to protect Al-Aqsa Mosque, and safeguard Jerusalem by assuming the appropriate positions to ward off this danger, and provide the various elements of steadfastness to ensure the survival of the citizens of this holy land where they grew up as their ancestors centuries before the creation of Israel.”

2) Towards a Unified National Policy for the Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon and a future vision for LPDC

a) The Rationale

The LPDC, based on the direction of the Prime Minister, has conducted in the beginning of the 3rd quarter an internal evaluation testing its performance against the initial mandate and role. Under the title “Towards a Unified National Policy to Govern the Palestinian Refugees file in Lebanon & Future Vision for LPDC” and with activities support from IDRC; the LPDC president initiated and managed a process of consultation and discussion with key stakeholders on the Palestinian refugee issue in Lebanon with the objective of developing a policy options document to the GoL including options for the management of the Palestinian refugees file in Lebanon, while developing a future vision for the LPDC.
This process of consultation was based on the experience of the work of the LPDC since 2005 and its technical staff. It involved past LPDC Presidents, representatives from key political parties in Lebanon, representatives and ministers from the different ministries that are part of the LPDC technical committee, UN officials, Palestinian factions officials in Lebanon and key Palestinian and Lebanese academics and experts on the refugee issue as well as representatives from civil society organizations.

In result, a law proposal was drafted including a complete restructuring of the LPDC into a High Commission for Palestine Refugee Affairs, with an expanded mandate to lead on formulating a unified national policy on Palestinian affairs. The Commission would have a Planning Department and an Executive Department; the former comprised of a Strategic Planning Division whose role would be to develop medium and long term action plans to improve camp conditions in coordination with UNRWA, and a National Observatory Unit tasked with conducting a comprehensive survey and collecting and consolidating all data on Palestinian refugees to inform policy-making, as well as monitoring and documenting all developments pertaining to Palestinian refugees nationally, regionally, and internationally. The latter department would include a Coordination Division and a Communication and Media Division.

Though this draft law is pending a Cabinet decree and parliamentary approval, the announcement of this re-structuring proposal from the Serail, under the patronage and support of Prime Minister Mikati, strongly indicate that all parties have agreed to it. The LPDC is moving forward in discussions with donors to fund the implementation of several of these activities as a precursor to the formal establishment of these units. President Khaldoun welcomed and strongly supported the development of an in-house monitoring capability, viewing this as a key step in developing the Observatory Unit, as well as enhancing the Lebanese state’s ability to play a greater role in coordinating aid and development in the camps with UNRWA and the international community, as well as have increased oversight and influence on service delivery. Given the expected rise in the number of PRS arriving with worsening security conditions in Syria, it is becoming more critical that the Lebanese state is better equipped to manage and coordinate aid and relief efforts.
b) Consultation Meetings

Consultative Meetings sought to engage both Palestinians and Lebanese parties within the frame of open and transparent debates including representatives from key political parties in Lebanon, representatives from the different ministries that are part of the LPDC technical committee, UNRWA officials, Palestinian officials in Lebanon and key Palestinian and Lebanese academics and experts on the refugee issue as well as representatives from civil society organizations.

Additional meetings and consultations were undertaken with past LPDC Presidents (H.E. Khalil Mekkawi, H.E. Abdel Majid Kassir and Me Maya Majzoub). Other meetings and working lunches included partner-NGOs (Common Space Initiative (CSI)…) to define the needs and listen to suggestions and rational opinions about the re-structuring process and the amendment of the LPDC mandate.

Based on the past experience of LPDC since 2005 and the work of its technical staff, key issues and questions were addressed about the LPDC’s mandate and its evolution since 2005 with the simultaneous presidency, the lessons learnt from the experience on the ground, the external and internal challenges stemming from the nature and prerogatives, Lebanon’s representation and perception among Palestinian community, regionally among Arab countries and UNRWA; the relation with UNRWA, with Palestinian officials and with Lebanese officials and politicians and finally the relation with donor communities as well as other international organizations.

The most important element that was discussed was related to the needed institutional re-structuring that LPDC should undergo in order to manage the refugee’s file in Lebanon in the short, medium and long terms. The major outcome was to submit a proposal to the Government of Lebanon to place this re-structuring process in a legal framework and outline a clear policy towards the Palestinian refugees residing on Lebanese territory.

c) Drafting the Policy Document

A retreat to the LPDC team with the help of appointed consultants was conducted to filter and segregate the information and proposals generated from the consultative meetings. A skeleton including different chapters was outlined seeking the best way to
improve, amend and add to finalize the draft before sending it to printing production. Brainstorming sessions and a comprehensive review of all the parts was performed to produce the final document.

**d) Launching Event**

Under the patronage of PM Najib Mikati and based on the recommendations stemming from the series of consultative meetings organized by LPDC with all stakeholders and parties concerned with the Palestinian refugees issue, LPDC held a launching event to present its vision titled: “Toward a Unified National Policy for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and a Future Vision for LPDC”. The event was attended by a crowd of officials, diplomats, experts and concerned parties; it features a presentation of the most important recommendations and an outline of the suggested re-structuring process. Dr. Khaldoun el Charif addressed the audience noting the compelling reasons that led to drafting this proposal, urging the parliamentarians to thoroughly examine the proposal before transferring it to the Council of Ministers for approval. UNDP Resident Representative, Robert Watkins, underlined the support offered by UNDP in various fields and PM Mikati concluded the meeting by stressing the important role of LPDC at this delicate juncture.

**V- COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH**

Upholding the current management structure, improving the capacity of the LPDC, strengthening the role of the inter-ministerial committee and alleviating administrative procedures will help in bolstering the public’s confidence and present LPDC’s work as credible, transparent and inclusive. An active communication and exchange channels are needed to present all positive outcomes and ensure transparency by relying on various channels and tools:

1) **Tools: Website, Social media and Newsletters**

The current Hosting environment is cater for an average of 2000 unique visitors per month, unlimited disk space as well as a bandwidth of 1GB of monthly traffic
This major shift to a modern and advanced portal replaced a primitive HTML coded and old website Hosted and managed by a limited featured back office which wasn’t able to be developed. Furthermore, it provided smooth and easy operation to manage and update and even create new sections or submenus inside the current website when needed

a) Website
During the past year we focused on upgrading LPDC’s digital image: the LPDC website www.lpdc.gov.lb has been developed to reflect the new vision and action.

b) Social media: Facebook and Twitter:
- A Facebook is updated in parallel with LPDC’s website.
- A Twitter subscription provides timely tweets about LPDC’s major actions and allows following different stakeholders and related partners.

c) Newsletters 9
The issuance of Newsletter 9 seeks to present LPDC’s work and strategy: summaries of activities are released in both English and Arabic to reflect the technical team, and president’s activities to the various audiences: Lebanese public, Palestinian refugees and international community.

d) Newsletter 10
The Newsletter 10 marks the beginning of the manadate of the newly appointed LPDC Chairman, Dr Hassan Mneymenh, seeking to highlight the major actions, contacts and achievements he reached in the first six months of his mandate.

VI- IMPACT

Based on the work carried out during the past year and the achievements highlighted in this report, the following levels of impact should be put forward:

1) The LPDC was able to get back on track after a prolonged transitional period. It continued to play a central operational role in the reconstruction of NBC, supporting key coordination mechanisms, and working closely with UNRWA on resolving problems with Lebanese ministries;

2) The LPDC succeeded in reaching out to all 12 Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, acting as the Government’s civilian face among the Palestinian community
representing the Lebanese Government’s policies. The LPDC has managed to establish a regular communication and coordination process with all camps through their community key representatives (i.e. popular committees) representing all parties and factions. The emphasis has been the inclusion of all parties in the LPDC coordination efforts with no exception of any faction or group. This strategy allows the Lebanese government through the LPDC to grasp a broader view of the Palestinian socioeconomic and political landscape.

3) Despite a complicated political environment in Lebanon, the LPDC took the first steps towards enhancing the relationship between a number of Ministries (e.g. the Directorate of Political and Refugee Affairs at the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities and the Directorate General of Security General and the Palestinian refugee community. It aims to support these Ministries in strengthening their capacity to respond to the specific needs of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon mainly, the Directorate of Political and Refugee Affairs at the Ministry of Interior. In continuation of an initiative started in 2012, the LPDC support continued to DPRA in 2013.

4) For the first time and in most camps, Palestinian community feel that the Lebanese government is considering the Palestinian community in general and the camps in particular from a non-security perspective rather from a civilian angle which will, according to members of popular committees, positively impact the Lebanese Palestinian relationships.

VII- KEY CHALLENGES

1) Inter– governmental level:
   - Lack of awareness among governmental institutions towards Palestinian community and the situation on the ground inside the Palestinian camps and gatherings.
   - Lack of understanding of the LPDC role: some if not most departments within governmental institutions still lack information and awareness regarding the LPDC’s role and responsibility.
   - Lack of resources within public institutions.

2) External – field: camps and gatherings level:
   - Limited understanding of the LPDC’s mandate.
   - Lack of understanding of the LPDC role as a consultative body providing recommendations to the PM office.
   - Lack of resources at the local level to address the needs of Palestinian camps and gatherings.
- Lack of coordination between all relevant stakeholders.

3) **Project implementation Level:**

- Limited financial resources for the project, fundraising is taking place on yearly basis. In 2013, the project lacked funding during the 1st half of the year. Also, the existing funds are expected to sustain the project till the end of 2014.

**VIII- PROPOSED ACTION PLAN**

1) **Establishment of the National Observatory for Palestinian Affairs**

Although the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are highly surveyed and studied by different stakeholders, however it’s never been recorded that any official body had ever conducted surveys in camps. For example, the population of Palestinian refugees remained an estimation includes a gap between UNRWA figure of 450,000 and the latest AUB study which estimated 210,000 refugees currently residing Lebanon. The absence of official comprehensive and accurate data mainly affected the ability of the GoL to base sound policies towards Palestinian refugees on solid grounds.

In order to facilitate this goal however, there is a massive need for clear and accurate information and statistical data on living conditions and urban profile in the Palestinian camps, adjacent areas and gatherings, the three geographical distinctions which constitutes a gap today. The GoL will require a policymaking tool that shall enable generating knowledge, developing indicators and monitoring living conditions to guide systematic public policy discussions by Government bodies and officials.

Therefore, the LPDC new vision “Towards a Unified National Policy for the Palestinian Refugees & Future Vision for LPDC” concluded with the importance of laying the GoL policies towards Palestinian refugees on indicators based on accurate information and statistical Data and therefore suggested the formation of a **National Observatory** mandated with:

- Prepare a comprehensive survey and collect information and data related to the Palestinian presence in Lebanon as a tool for decision-making and policy-making;
- Monitor and document the developments and decisions pertaining to the Palestinian issue at the Arab, regional and international levels.

As such, LPDC along with the support of the PMO and Lebanese public administrations will be working towards establishing a “National observatory for Palestinian Affairs in Lebanon” (Annex 2) in 2014-2015 which will be a platform to integrate all sorts of databases and existing studies into a unified structure. This “new” form of knowledge will support the LPDC’s effort to recognize and enhance its
interlocutor role among the governmental/ international and local bodies. In addition, it will help to formalize clear criteria for prioritizing projects and programs.

The objective of this 2014 Action Plan therefore remains to strengthen the capacity of the LPDC to establish the National Observatory for Palestinian Affairs that enables the GoL to generate a comprehensive policy on the Palestinian refugee issues, with a view to improving their living conditions. The consolidation of data serves to monitor (baseline reference) the improvement in the living conditions of Palestinian refugees while setting the stage for the implementation of any upcoming peace agreement on various levels: administrative procedures, indemnities and Right of Return, in accordance with other host countries. To realize this objective, a project document has been prepared which stipulates on:

**Component 1:** Administrative and technical support provided to the establishment of the National Observatory through the inter-ministerial committee and the technical committee;

**Component 2:** Population and Housing Census in the Palestinian Camps and Gatherings carried out in partnership with the Central Administration of Statistics (CAS) and Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS);

**Component 3:** Capacity Building for Lebanese Public administrations mandated with the registration of Palestinian Refugees.

The LPDC President is currently reaching out to Donors community on one hand to gain financial support to the project. On the other hand, Dr. Mneymneh is communicating and coordinating with the PMO to pass the project through the council of ministers the earliest possible as a mean to reinforce it but also in request of the cabinet financial cost sharing.

**IX - Enhancing Lebanon’s Response to the influx of Palestinian refugees from Syria: Monitoring Service Delivery in the Palestinian Camps of Lebanon**

The influx of an estimated 49,500 Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS) to Lebanon’s Palestinian camps and gatherings has added substantial pressure on an extant fragile situation. Crowded living conditions, inadequate service provision, weak or non-existent governance structures and mechanisms, and a precarious security situation have all been exacerbated by the arrival of PRS and the spill-over of the Syrian conflict.
Despite a surge in efforts by both UNRWA and local Palestinian NGOs, PRS still report the insufficient aid is reaching them, while Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (PRL) are increasingly reporting deterioration in the services and aid they already receive. Over July and August 2013, Pursue conducted a large-scale household survey in the four camps hosting the largest number of PRS families; ‘Ayn al-Hilweh in southern Lebanon, Baddawi in the north, Bourj al-Barajneh in the southern suburbs of Beirut, and Jalil in the Beqaa. It concluded to: While most PRS households had received some form of aid in 2013, the majority of PRS households lived in abject poverty – the highest rates of abject poverty were reported in Jalil at (95%) and the lowest percentage in Bourj al-Barajneh (55%).

As such, the LPDC will be working to establish a monitoring unit continuously monitors and assesses UNRWA and non-UNRWA service delivery to all Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, in collaboration with local and Palestinian stakeholders, in order to enhance service and relief response to refugees. This unit will contribute to the establishment of the National Observatory Division planned as part of the LPDC’s reformed structure. The expected outputs shall be:

1. An assessment of the effectiveness and impact of current service and aid delivery in all 12 Palestinian refugee camps through a comprehensive survey, the data of which will form a component of the database to be established by the LPDC’s monitoring unit.
2. A databank of all PRS aid and relief efforts to inform coordination. With a Lebanese state mandate, NGOs are more likely to respond positively to data sharing requests.
3. Monitoring unit staff is capacitated in service delivery monitoring and evaluation, and develops short and medium-term plans and mechanisms for continuous assessment.
4. A pool of assessment partners and consultants from local stakeholders is formed to assist in assessments and participate in analysing and disseminating lessons learned.