



MASAR ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

We Draw the Path with Celebration

February 2024

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

NYP	National Youth Policy
RPL	Rights for Palestinians in Lebanon
YCD	Youth for Community Development
YPG	Youth Policy and Governance

I. MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF OFFICE

Dear readers,

The year 2023 was another remarkably difficult year at all levels, economically, financially, socially, security, and in terms of catering to basic needs and hope. Without a national rescue plan, Lebanon continues to see a massive exodus of educated professionals, accompanied with a wave of people plunging into abject poverty inside the country. In 2023, Masar Association continued to focus its programs on development, policy change, and good governance, given that these are key factors to initiate political change in Lebanon. To strengthen the wellbeing of the nation, Masar Association has started integrating humanitarian assistance into its project focus where and when possible.

Despite the severe shortages, interruptions, and high cost of electricity, internet, gas, and fuel, which continue to restrict citizens' mobility and connectivity, we at Masar, devised contingency plans that enabled us to largely overcome these obstacles. Masar's work and collaboration internally and externally between our team and our partner organizations, youth, and citizens at large ran smoothly.

On another note, the increasingly unpredictable, unjust, and undocumented banking regulations have continued to hamper our work in 2023. Banks have continued to restrict withdrawal transactions and to act as auditors, accountants, and donors. Flagrant examples are numerous. These practices have made banks gain a negative reputation abroad which prevented timely channeling of funds to one of our projects in 2023. Banks have continued to ban organizations and citizens the freedoms allowed to them by the Lebanese Constitution while the political elite does not act.

A heartfelt thank you to the citizens, the young people, and Palestinian nurses who withstood the big challenges and difficulties to the end of serving their local communities, co-citizens, and the country at large.

Notwithstanding all challenges and restrictions, we at Masar, promise the people we work with, to continue our impact-driven programs throughout the year of 2024 to respect their steadfastness and determination to pursue their goals in development, policy change, and good governance, as well as to address the growing demands for basic needs through new interventions, synergies, and partnerships.

Kamal Shayya

President and Head of Office

II. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Masar team would like to thank all the partner organizations, youth groups, political groups, Palestinian nurses, donors, external consultants, friends, and members who have participated in the various projects' activities in 2023, contributed with ideas, enriched the discussions, brought in new perspectives, and dared to throw dream ideas. Indeed, it is the dream ideas that keep Masar alive and responsive to citizens' aspirations.

III.ABOUT MASAR

Masar is a Lebanese non-governmental organization that was founded in 2005 with the aim to contribute to local and national development processes and the advancement of society. Masar works in holistic development with an equal focus on community and policy levels, thus constantly promoting development, policy change, and good governance. Masar's programs are based on human rights and the promotion of citizenship while ensuring that empowerment and advocacy are key approaches in the association's work. It cooperates with youth as an initial point of contact since it profoundly believes in their abilities.

In its communal work, Masar mobilizes young people and empowers them to act as agents of change in their local communities. In its policy and governance work, Masar advocates the implementation of the National Youth Policy that was endorsed in 2012 by the Lebanese Government as well as upholding the rule of law. Masar also advocates the acknowledgment of Palestinian refugees' human rights in Lebanon to have a dignified life until United Nations Resolution 194 is implemented and to mitigate incorrect stereotypes against them.

Vision

We envision a secular and inclusive State where every human being is actively engaged, enjoys public freedoms, and where the rule of law is respected and abided by.

Mission

Masar Association was founded in 2005 with the aim of contributing to local and national development processes and the advancement of society. Masar operates at the community and policy levels, enabling wide access to information and emphasizing empowerment and advocacy as cross-cutting approaches. In fact, it works with every human being in Lebanon through mobilization, empowerment, participation, networking, and advocacy to achieve development, policy change, and the promotion of good governance.

Values

At Masar, we are guided by a set of core values, at the center of which lie participatory decision making, diversity, non-discrimination and inclusiveness, human rights, equity, and the promotion of a knowledge society.



IV. MASAR'S PROGRAMS

1. Youth for Community Development (YCD) Program

This program aims at mobilizing and empowering young men and women to become active citizens in their communities through (a) developing their capacities via the provision of training, concepts, skills, tools, monitoring, and support on the field to enable them to positively engage in civic and communal life, and (b) supporting them establish partnerships and synergies to initiate dialogue over their priorities with municipal councils and local authorities among other stakeholders. Through this program, youth from across Lebanon are provided with a space to meet, interact, and exchange experiences, thus supporting them appreciate diversity and practice their citizenship roles away from sectarian and regional limitations. More importantly, youth are provided with an opportunity to put in practice the knowledge and skills they learn during the trainings and are guided to be sensitive to their communities' needs critically, thus promoting their self-confidence and self-esteem through their communal work. They are empowered to identify their needs, problems, and ambitions; prioritize them; plan and implement advocacy projects; and collaborate and initiate a dialogue with relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, and on a broader scope, the program aims to establish a cross-regional and cross-sectarian youth movement through which youth are enabled to develop their collective efficacy to work on their identified priorities and those of their communities as active young citizens.

1.1 "Building CSOs' Capacity to Deliver Social Stability Projects in West Beqaa, Zahle, and Upper Chouf" project in partnership with International Alert and funding from GIZ

In 2023, the implementation of the YCD program was limited to the area of Mansoura in West Bekaa. The project with International Alert supports organizations active in targeted communities with the aim to strengthen social stability within these communities during September 2023 - July 2024. Similarly, Masar association teamed up with the CLAC Mansoura, a community-based organization, to implement this project.

The project consists of training sessions spanning social stability, mental health and psycho-social support; safeguarding; governance & financial management, fundraising, project management, common ground approach, as well as monitoring and evaluation. In 2024, the project will focus on the planning and implementation of a communal social stability project in Mansoura.

Project accomplishments, learnings, and challenges will be highlighted in the 2024 annual report after the communal project is implemented, noting that these matters are best analyzed when work on the ground takes place rather inside training workshops rooms.



2. Youth Policy and Governance (YPG) Program

This program seeks to support youth to push for the implementation of the National Youth Policy (NYP) which was endorsed by the Lebanese Government in April 2012. The NYP is an exceptional experience in the Arab region, particularly that young people themselves have set its recommendations and submitted them to the Ministry of Youth and Sports, demanding its ratification by the Cabinet. The aim of advocating the NYP is to ensure that youth are guaranteed their rights to welfare and influence. At a broader scale, this program supports the engagement of citizens in dialogue and advocacy with duty bearers and political decision makers over issues and topics pertaining to enhancing the rule of law, access to information, accountability, and participation in the public life.

2.1.1 “Youth Advocate their Rights in Lebanon: the Lebanese Youth Policy” project in partnership with the Royal Embassy of Norway in Lebanon

The project is two- fold focusing on 1) the Lebanese youth policy and 2) Palestinian nurses in Lebanon, and spans from June 2023 – May 2025.

For the Lebanese youth policy component, the project aims, on the long term, to improve governance relating to the rights of Lebanese youth, while on the short term, it aims to address Lebanese youth rights through advocating and campaigning the implementation of the national youth policy. Recalling, that a key focus of the project in 2023 has been to reactivate the “Youth Forum for Youth Policies”, which is a non- governmental network of youth-focused NGOs and youth wings in political parties that emerged in 2007 in parallel to the decree No 80/2007 issued by the Lebanese Council of Ministers and that specified having a national Consultation over the youth policy. Today, the Youth Forum consists of 23 active member organizations, including Masar association which is also in charge of its Secretariat. In 2023, its General Assembly convened 4 times with the participation of 77 young persons (14 F/ 63 M) representatives of member organizations in the Forum. They updated by-laws, developed and endorsed a 5-year strategy, in addition to a new branding. Also, in December 2023, the Youth Forum held a meeting with the Minister of Youth & Sports and presented its 5-year Strategy, as well as discussed ways of cooperation to implement the provisions of the national youth policy. A total of 12 participants (10 males / 2 females) attended, representing member organizations.

[Read the Youth Forum 5-year Strategy in Arabic and English here.](#)



2.1.2 The “National Youth Policy” project in partnership with the National Council of Swedish Youth Organizations

The project advocates the implementation of the national youth policy endorsed in 2012 by the Lebanese Council of Ministers, and which aims to provide Lebanese youth with multi-sectoral quality services and access to have influence in the public life. Due to the lacking of a comprehensive data on Lebanese youth, the project’s focus in 2023 had been to develop a profile for Lebanese youth that is inter-sectoral, spanning food security, health services, mental health, enrollment in schools and universities and dropout levels, employability, immigration, civic and political participation, volunteerism, climate change, gas and oil in tertiary education curricula and job opportunities for Lebanese youth, and youth with disability as an intersectional issue.

2.1.3 “Women, Youth, Peace & Security” project with Search for Common Ground and the National Commission for Lebanese Woman

The project aims to strengthen women and youth’s meaningful and enduring participation in advancing inclusive peace and security processes during May 2023 - April 2024. More specifically, it amplifies the influence of youth and women peacebuilders at the grassroots level, catalyzes the broad inclusion of grassroots peacebuilders in municipal and national institutions and peace processes, and advances social norms that support the meaningful inclusion of diverse stakeholders in peace and security. The project brings together some 20 organizations, and involves network meetings, strategy development workshops, consultations with key stakeholders, and capacity development training. In 2024, the project is expected to promote models of women and youth’s role in promoting peace and security at the grassroots level.



2.2 Key Accomplishments and Learnings

A 5-year strategic plan (2024 – 2028) for the “Youth Forum for Youth Policies” is developed. Facilitated by an external consultant, the Strategy development process was participatory whereby brainstorming, validation, and endorsement meetings were attended by member organizations. The Youth Forum envisions a State where the rule of law guarantees for the Lebanese youth all their rights.

A new branding for the Youth Forum is created, including a new logo, brand book, and various communications templates. Consequently, the Youth Forum website and social media pages were being updated, and a 1-page brochure is designed and printed in Arabic and English.

One youth policy priority identified by the Youth Forum: supporting the Lebanese University, which is the national university where more than 70.000 are enrolled. Discussions in the Youth Forum spanned the various university needs from rehabilitation of buildings to enhancing students’ participation. In 2024, meetings will be held with the University’s Administration to discuss further these needs and agree to focus on one specific topic, after which a comprehensive desk review will be developed, a bill of right drafted, a digital media campaign launched, and advocacy meetings with political decision makers and duty bearers organized with the aim to move forward with supporting the University.

The Youth Forum’s 5-year Strategy is presented to the Ministry of Youth& Sports and a collaboration synergy is in progress over the implementation of the youth policy.

One learning is the importance of having the youth policy process led locally i.e. by youth civil society, where young people sit at the table with government officials to directly negotiate their priorities as right-holders.

2.3 Challenges Faced

The main challenge facing the Youth Policy and Governance program in 2023 has been the disrupted policy making processes in the country. Furthermore, the severe financial crisis and the rising poverty levels have prioritized humanitarian and relief work-based funding over governance. Despite this, we, at Masar, believe that it is very important to work on enhancing governance and citizen-centered policy making as it is the entry point to reforming the political system and restoring the rule of law and the economy. In another vein, the Lebanese Youth Profile was not completed in 2023 due to funding transfer disruptions related to the challenging local banking context. But the work is resumed in 2024 and will have a timely launch with the aim to feed into the youth policy work.

In 2012, the youth age in Lebanon was defined at 15- 29 based on socio- economic characteristics. Today, it is important to revisit this age as these socio- economic characteristics have changed tremendously.

3. Rights for Palestinians in Lebanon (RPL)

This program is implemented at two levels: community and policy. RPL aims to ensure that Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon (PRL) are enabled to lead a dignified life until the United Nations Resolution 194 is implemented. It works on breaking stereotypes held towards PRL through organizing strolls and discussion among Lebanese and Palestinian groups. It opens the door for joint action, advocating for the endorsement of human rights through enhancing communication opportunities between Lebanese and Palestinian groups for the best interest of both nations and through forwarding policy recommendations to relevant duty bearers and service providers.

3.1 “Youth Advocate their Rights in Lebanon: Qindeel – The Network of Palestinian Nurses in Lebanon” project in partnership with the Royal Embassy of Norway in Lebanon

The project is two- fold focusing on 1) the Lebanese youth policy and 2) Palestinian nurses in Lebanon, and spans from June 2023 – May 2025. The Palestinian Nurses in Lebanon project aims to capacitate “Qindeel – The Network of Palestinian Nurses in Lebanon”, which was formed at the end of 2021 and which embraces Palestinian nurses living in Lebanon and working in the medical sector across the country. Qindeel envisions maintaining job security and equal rights for Palestinian nurses in Lebanon through raising awareness on relevant laws and advocacy action. In 2023, efforts focused on capacitating its members. To this end, several capacity development workshops were held on the following topics: human rights, the reality of Palestinian rights in Lebanon; Law 221 that regulates the nursing profession in Lebanon, access to justice, socio-economic rights for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon as well as hospital policy challenges and advocacy skills. These trainings were attended by a total of 34 (16F/ 18M) Palestinian nurses. Also, Masar aimed to expand the network through outreach activities in Beirut, the North, and South areas where it organized introductory sessions with 54 Palestinian nurses (23 F/ 31 M) from across the country to brief them about Qindeel and invite or urge them to join it. Qindeel also held introductory meetings with UNRWA, namely the nursing and legal aid departments and exchanged ideas and best practices on the provision of job security and equal rights for Palestinian nurses in Lebanon.



[View here a summary video on Qindeel activities in 2023.](#)



3.2 Key Accomplishments and Learnings

The maintenance of “Qindeel” is considered an accomplishment in light of the exodus of nurses from Lebanon, including Palestinian nurses. Having a network of Palestinian nurses who are capacitated to negotiate their social and economic rights at the workplace is a model of the less advantaged being at the core of advocacy action, rather than only relying on external supporters to advocate their rights in their name. Below, are key accomplishments for Qindeel – the Network of Palestinian Nurses in Lebanon.

A group of 23 (7 females/ 16 males) Palestinian nurses and individuals working in the medical field who constitute “Qindeel – The Network of Palestinian Nurses in Lebanon”, are capacitated with legal and policy related information and skills that help them negotiate their rights at the workplace with relevant duty bearers and service providers.

Qindeel’s 5-year actionable strategy that was developed in 2022 is being implemented steadily and consistently. Also, the network is gaining visibility on social media and succeeded in forging its name and presence within the Palestinian civil society in Lebanon and among relevant stakeholders.

3.3 Challenges Faced

The main challenges faced under the RPL program during 2023 could be summarized in the following:

The ongoing emigration of qualified Palestinian nurses from the country, seeking better opportunities abroad. In fact, this is a highlight of the broader exodus that the country has been witnessing since October 2019. In fact, it has been quite challenging for Masar team to maintain a network of qualified Palestinian nurses who can lead the advocacy work for their rights at the workplace. Strengthening Qindeel remains a key ongoing objective.

The tight schedule of the nurses who make up the network. On the one hand, they need to know of the meetings’ schedules a month ahead of time, so they can take a day off from work to attend the network meetings. Nevertheless, many work 2 to 3 jobs to survive, which leaves them with almost no time to commit.

Advocating rights-based issues seems unhandy in a country facing a multi-faceted crisis. Yet, Masar’s team has opted to work internally in the project during 2023, mostly focusing on establishing and consolidating the network, as well as planning for advocacy action with key stakeholders concerned with Palestinian refugees and nurses up until the circumstances allow to take the advocacy action externally, hopefully in early 2024. As regards “Qindeel”, experience has proven that Palestinian nurses do need ample time to meet, get acquainted with each other, engage in in-depth discussions on the concept behind the network itself, exchange views on their work conditions, legal status, challenges they face at the workplace, the safety nets they need... Such meetings are important for nurses not only to plan their work agenda, but also to enable them to cultivate their collective efficacy as a lobby group.

V. MASAR HIGHLIGHTS IN 2023

In August 2023, Masar association completed the organizational certification process, and successfully fulfilled the certification requirements of the NGOi at the American University of Beirut, and became an AUB certified organization, earning the gold level with a score of 4.36/5. The certificate is valid until August 2025.

The certification is proof that Masar has strong internal and external governance at the legal, financial, administrative, programmatic, communication, staffing levels, amongst others.

A Certification ceremony was held on 16 August 2023 at the Global Health Institute/ The American University of Beirut offices where a trophy and a certificate were awarded to Masar team.

The certification process was in the frame of a 3- year partnership during 2021- 2023 on Organizational Development with the Asfari Foundation to whom we extend our appreciation for such a precious partnership.

“The journey was lengthy, demanding, and challenging, yet it puts Masar on a more solid ground to pursue its vision for a secular, civic and inclusive State where every human being is actively engaged, enjoys public freedoms, and where the rule of law is respected and abided by in our beloved Lebanon” – Rania Sabaayon, executive director.

[View the Certification ceremony.](#)



VI. MASAR SUCCESS STORIES IN 2023

Masar association considers the re-activation of the “Youth Forum for Youth Policies” a key success as it has been able to navigate through all odds, involving the political stalemate, interrupted policy making in the country, and attempts to co-opt the role of Lebanese youth civil society by some international players despite trends calling for “Localization”. Marked by diversity and involving youth-focused NGOs and youth wings in political parties that incorporate the various dimensions of the political spectrum in Lebanon, the “Youth Forum for Youth Policies” endorsed in 2023 a 5-year strategy that guides member organizations around agreed strategic objectives and sustains their actions to make greater impact and influence positive change.

The “Youth Forum for Youth Policies” will continue to set a model of Lebanese youth coming together and advocating their priorities as rights- holders, irrespective of their ideological backgrounds, and negotiating them directly with duty bearers.



VII. SUMMARY ON MASAR'S FUNDING

Donor	Total Project Amount in USD	Project Duration	Project Title
The National Council of Swedish Youth Organization - LSU	52,221.15	Jan 01 - Dec 31, 2023	"National Youth Policy"
The Asfari Foundation	44,881.00	Jan 01 - Dec 31, 2023	"Organization Development"
The Norwegian Embassy	467,473.74	Jun 01, 2023 - May 30, 2025	"Youth Advocating Their Rights in Lebanon"

VIII. MASAR'S FUTURE GOALS

In 2024, Masar will continue to explore new partnerships and collaboration opportunities to finance the implementation of its three programs as part of its 5-year strategy. It strives to continually focus its organizational efforts on development, policy change, and good governance through community-based empowerment, local and national advocacy, campaigning, and networking. Yet, given the growing living requirements as a result of the multi-faceted crisis Lebanon is witnessing, Masar furthers its integration of humanitarian interventions into its work through coupling relief with long term development, while maintaining a citizen-centered approach at the heart of its operations. In 2024, Masar aims to promote models of humanitarian interventions that have people's participation at its core. In parallel, Masar will carry on with capacitating and managing the 2 networks it supports, namely "The Youth Forum for Youth Polices" and "Qindeel – The Network of Palestinian Nurses in Lebanon", so they advance with their advocacy agendas that aim to have youth friendly policies and job security for Palestinian nurses in Lebanon.



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