The role of education in Preventing Violent Extremism in Lebanon

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Dahab, 14 years old

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A word of thanks

Many people helped to make this research possible. First of all is the trust and funding of the Knowledge Platform for Security and Rule of Law, without which this report would not have seen the light of day. We are equally grateful to EMMA – Experts in Media and Society for giving us the time, space and (financial) support to conduct this research. Especially Hans Moors (partner at EMMA), whom we thank for his tireless input, analysis, proof reading and intellectual guidance. Next up are all the (I)NGOs who gave us an in-depth insight and entrance into their work and programs: UNICEF, War Child Netherlands and Lebanon, URDA Lebanon and Netherlands, Odette Helou and other AVT-L staff members, and the Lebanese partner organizations Mouvement Social and LOST, for facilitating the interviews and warmly welcoming us into their educational centers. We are similarly grateful for the information and guidance we received from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Maxim Stunt and Sudi Suleiman amongst many others. Related to this, we are thankful for the Lebanese contextual insights we received from Vida Hamd at the Dutch Embassy in Beirut. Moreover, without our translator Bashir Honeini – who traveled throughout Lebanon with us for the entire research – this report and our knowledge of the country would not have been what it is today.

AND LAST BUT CERTAINLY NOT LEAST, AN ENORMOUS THANK YOU TO ALL THE CHILDREN WHO LET US INTO THEIR LIVES, IF ONLY FOR A SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME. WE ARE ETERNALLY GRATEFUL FOR YOUR TRUST.

List of abbreviations & definitions

ABLN   **Adapted Basic Literacy and Numeracy**
The normal BLN classes adapted to the respective lives of the children, often those who combine education with long working hours.

ALP   **Accelerated Learning Program**
The adaptive learning programmes that are designed to bridge the gap between the BLN classes and the (public) school system in Lebanon.

BHOS   **Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (MFA)**

BLN   **Basic Literacy and Numeracy**
Informal education, mostly consisting of three different classes English, Arabic and life-skill classes.

LIFE-SKILLS CLASSES   *Classes in which psychosocial competencies and abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour are taught*

MCSL   **Multiannual Country Strategy on Lebanon (MFA)**

MEHE   **Ministry of Education and Higher Education of Lebanon**

MFA   **Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Netherlands**

ODA   **Official Development Assistance**

PSS   **Psychosocial Support**

PVE   **Preventing Violent Extremism**

Content

Introduction

The quote on the next page from Sigrid Kaag – the Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation – indicates that creating stability has become a focal point for the Dutch government. According to Kaag, the creation of stability is vital in securing and creating safety. The policy document 'Investing in Global Prospects' (MFA 2018, 13) states that the "focus of development cooperation is shifting to the unstable regions of West Africa / Sahel, the Horn of Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, to tackle root causes of poverty, migration, terror and climate change". As will become clear in this research report, this focus of the Netherlands in Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (BHOS) is in line with a wider global shift, where terrorism and violent extremism have become regarded as significant threats to stability, peace and development. The objectives presented by the Ministry are thus in accordance with the wider global debate on PVE (Preventing Violent Extremism).

A key part to securing stability and – in the wider debate – to preventing extremism from happening, is the provision of education, aiming to offer a 'perspective' on the future. By investing in education, employment and social cohesion, the Netherlands works on creating stability (MFA 2018). The hypothesis is that offering education to children at risk will eventually lead to a more stable situation in the Middle East, which will also trickle down to Europe and the Netherlands (Ibid). Education is paramount from this perspective, since more than 3.5 million refugee children between 5 and 17 years old cannot attend schooling, and they are in danger of becoming "a lost generation" (MFA 2018, 44). Since Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq are profoundly affected by the conflict in Syria and the fight against extremism, the Dutch government finds it important to focus on preventing the instability in the region from spreading beyond its borders, therefore strengthening their cooperation with these countries. As a result, the Netherlands specifically supports education programs for refugees in Lebanon and Jordan, aiming to provide youth with better labour opportunities, with the intention to offer relevant general and vocational education. In the Dutch Multiannual Country Strategy 2019-2022 for Lebanon (MCSL 2019), further reference is made to the importance of working on stability through education, specifically for refugee children in the country. It is estimated by UNICEF that half of the displaced Syrian children in Lebanon – more than 250,000 – remain out of formal and non-formal education. On top of that, the "out-of-school rates are highest among 15 to 18-year-old Syrians, with approximately 3% registered Syrians enrolled in public secondary schools and technical vocational public schools" (MCSL 2019, 4).

In order to fulfil these goals, more than half of the €200 million that has been allocated to Lebanon between 2019-2022, is invested in educational and protection projects (MCSL 2019). Next to this, regionally €30 million a year is allocated to improve education and another €10 million a year is assigned to 'preventing violent extremism', both envisioned here as combatting root causes of instability (MFA 2018, 102). Despite the reference to PVE in the budget, there is no explanation, nor definition, of PVE in 'Investing in Global Prospects' itself. There is however a reference to preventing radicalisation from taking place, stating that "The Netherlands is stepping up programmes targeting groups that are most susceptible to joining violent extremist organisations" (MFA 2018, 42). Also, here education is understood to be crucial in promoting a "culture of peace and acceptance of diversity".

The increasing focus on education, loosely related to the notion of preventing violent extremism, triggered us to find out how these policies lead to educational interventions in practice. With this in mind, the research focus lies on the role of education within the wider PVE debate, and subsequently aims to answer the question: what are the effects of educational interventions subsidized by the Dutch government on school-going children in Lebanon, in relation to preventing violent extremism? In order to understand the effect of educational interventions in Lebanon, more specifically in relation to PVE, a two-week in-depth field research has been performed from the end of September to beginning of October 2019. While in the country, over twenty in-depth interviews have been conducted with (mostly refugee) children who (for the greatest part) receive education subsidized by the Dutch government. Besides that, data from over 150 anonymous surveys has been gathered. Upon analysing the data, the importance of psychosocial support has come forward as a crucial component in the existing educational interventions. In this report, the data gathered from the field present the inherent connection between educational interventions, maintaining security in the form of preventing violent extremism and the importance of psychosocial support.

Thus, this report presents both the theoretical and the empirical data gathered during this research. First, the 'rise of PVE' is explained based on existing academic and policy research, followed by the connection between education and PVE. After this, the context provides a background on Lebanon's current social and political situation, including the Lebanese government's focus on PVE, and it goes into detail on the Dutch PVE-policy regarding Lebanon. The second part of the research then presents the empirical data per case study, illustrated with a life-story of an interviewee. Finally, a bridge between the empirical and theoretical data is made in the analysis, presenting the most important conclusions from the field. The report is concluded with a short conclusion and a list of recommendations per sector.

"Because, more stability there, also means more safety here"

Sigrid Kaag (Rijksoverheid 2020)

About the authors

Anthropological research can offer many unique insights, especially when looking into (violent) collisions of cultures. In the case of refugees, who have to adapt to new living conditions after having to forcibly flee from their homes, an anthropologist's perception becomes even more valuable. As Harrel-Bond and Voutir already mentioned in 1992, an anthropologist's insight into power and their expertise on structures of authority, "place them in an advantageous position to contribute to the formation of policy" (7), especially when researching refugees.

The authors of this study are – as can be expected – anthropologists. And we aim to better connect and inform practitioners and policy makers – especially those in countries far away from their focus area – of the happenings on the ground. This connection between here and there, between the Netherlands and Lebanon, is vital for both informed policy and the accurate execution thereof. We hope this study will be considered and used by those who need it to further improve the lives and future perspectives of those who had to flee their homes.

MARIJE RENATE LUITJENS (MSc)

For the last decade, Marije Renate Luitjens (1991) has been working within the field of peace studies, both as an academic and as an employee for various projects of the Dutch NGO Pax for Peace. Educated as an anthropologist, she has field work experience in Honduras, Catalunya, the Balkan and Lebanon. She is currently conducting her PhD research with the focus on peace and resilience at the Dublin City University, for which she will execute extensive fieldwork in both Kosovo and Colombia. Besides her PhD research, she is also working as a consultant for a variety of projects, among others this research in Lebanon. In May of 2020, she will present her forthcoming article on the peace march in Srebrenica at Columbia University.

LAURA SOFIE VAN DER REIJDEN (MA)

With a background in both anthropology and journalism, Laura Sofie van der Reijden (1989) has been working on societal topics such as extremism, polarisation, freedom of the press and discrimination. She's published for both English and Dutch magazines and newspapers, lead the online newsroom for OneWorld Magazine and has worked as a freelance journalist for several outlets. Next to the Netherlands and Lebanon, Laura has working experience in Egypt, Malawi, Turkey and America. She currently works as a researcher and advisor at EMMA – Experts in Media and Society, working both locally and internationally on safety, security and MENA-related projects.

Theory

THE RISE OF PVE

In any debate or literature concerning the rise of terrorism, the attacks of 9/11 are considered a turning point. Since 2001, the world has experienced an increasing amount of terrorist attacks, fostering a widespread growing fear and uncertainty (Da Silva 2017; Frazer & Christian 2015). As early as December 2001, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) argued that global terrorism should not only be encountered by military and intelligence means, but that the focus should also lay on tackling the root causes of the spreading phenomenon (OSCE 2001, 2-3). While most interventions at that time were still built on hard power, over the years the importance of soft power in the global fight against terrorism started to become apparent as well[1]. Early notions of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)-programming through soft power entered into the debate in Europe after the attacks in Madrid (2004) and London (2005). It was however only in 2015 that CVE made its way into the official global political jargon, after a three-day 'CVE Summit' chaired by Barack Obama (Frazer & Christian 2015, 2). Following this, in 2016 the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon announced the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, stressing that 'countering' violent extremism is not sufficient – it has to be prevented (UN 2016A; UNESCO 2019A). The action plan argued that it was crucial to take "systematic preventive steps to address the underlying conditions that drive individuals to radicalize and join violent extremist group" (UN 2016A).

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1   Hard power is based on military intervention, coercive diplomacy and economic sanctions, while soft power focuses the capacity to get others to do what you want (Wagner 2014).

2   Within this report, due to the all-encompassing notion of PVE and the use of PVE within Dutch policy documents, there will only be references to PVE.

3   Think of structural social marginalization and discrimination, endemic corruption; poorly governed or ungoverned areas, human rights violations.

4   Think of economic rewards, social status and respect from peers; a sense of belonging, adventure, and self-esteem or personal empowerment.

Notwithstanding, the body of (academic) literature in relation to - among others - the conceptualization, effect and importance of Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) has been growing rapidly over the last decade (Stephens et al. 2019; Kundnani & Hayes 2018; Da Silva 2017; Koroyatev et al. 2019). Despite this increase in research, there is however not a clear definition of PVE or CVE present, and along with that, no clear operationalization of the concepts, which makes it difficult to effectively implement C/PVE into policy programming. In the upcoming body of literature, there is an urgency to create better defined understandings of PVE and CVE, as the two concepts are now often used interchangeably (Stephens et al. 2019). Originally, the two different concepts emerged due to an inherent difference in understanding: while CVE specifically focuses on countering those that are already on the 'conveyer belt' of extremism, PVE would focus on preventing extremism from happening in its totality (Qudosi 2018). To manage these confusing notions, the United Nations General Assembly emphasized the importance of 'preventing violent extremism' in resolution 70/109 (UN 2015, 3/4) underlining the "vital importance of education, including human rights education, as the most effective means of promoting tolerance, in preventing the spread of extremism by instilling respect for life and promoting the practice of vital importance of education (...)". The then Secretary General Ban Ki-moon moreover presented the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism in 2015, reflecting the need to take a "more comprehensive approach which encompasses not only ongoing, essential security-based counter-terrorism measures, but also systematic preventative measures which directly address the drivers of violent extremism" (G-A report A/70/674). As a result, within the UN system the countering elements inherent to CVE, are also accounted for within PVE. In other words, PVE encompasses both the focus on those on the conveyer belt, and those who are not (yet) there. Despite this however, especially in output from before 2015, CVE and PVE often appear interchangeably within both academic literature and policy documents[2].

What complicates PVE-notions even further is the use of the concepts radicalization and (violent) extremism without clear definition; both concepts lack clarity in their use within security and development literature or policy (Kundnani & Hayes 2018; Novelli

2017; Da Silva 2017). Radicalization is often seen as a precursor to violent extremism, where radicalization does not necessarily lead to becoming 'extremist'. Moreover, extremism does not always involve the use of violence (Da Silva 2017). Various policies are however based on vague or oversimplified explanations of radicalization and extremism, occasionally even used as an equivalent for terrorism itself (Kundnani & Hayes 2018, 2-3). Despite the absence of a clear definition, the concept of PVE appears in a variety of different fields and disciplines, including psychology (Kruglanski et al. 2014; Jasko et al. 2016), development studies (Kessels & Nemr 2016) and criminology (Cherney 2016). While this research does not aim at offering a solid definition on PVE, we have adopted a broad focus on preventing violent extremism as a working definition within our research. Along these lines, we define PVE as *those actions taken to prevent violent acts that occur as part of, and are support by, violent ideologies.*

PVE IN THE FORM OF EDUCATION

Education is considered one of the key pillars of development practices, and as also presented in the Plan of Action to VE (UN 2015), it consequently has obtained a prominent focus in relation to PVE practices (Da Silva 2017; Lee 2011; Korotayev et al. 2019; Ghosh et al. 2017). The importance of education is linked to the understanding of preventing violent extremism along the lines of 'push and pull' factors; where push factors are understood as the (social) conditions "that favor the rise or spread in appeal of violent extremism or insurgency[3]" and pull factors as the "the personal rewards which membership in a group or movement, and participation in its activities may confer[4]" (USAID 2011, 3-4). With the rise of preventing violent extremism, it became clear that soft or preventive power – as opposed to hard power – is needed to counter these triggers (Da Silva 2017; Ghosh et al. 2017; Zeiger 2016, 2018). In that perspective, education is understood as a potential important measure to counter the push-pull factors.

Various studies indicate that education holds the protentional to reduce the breeding ground for violent extremism in the long run (Lee 2011; Korotayev et al. 2019; de Silva 2017; Ghosh et al. 2017), and it is a shared notion that education provides the necessary measures for children to develop strong life-skills and critical thinking

necessary to withstand the possible triggers to participate in violence supported by extremist notions (Ghosh et al. 2017, 120; Stephens et al. 2019; Mattson & Säljö 2018). Sirin and Rogers-Sirin (2015) argue that children who are not formally educated are more likely to feel marginalized and hopeless, which can make them vulnerable targets for radicalization. According to their research "ISIS is believed to be actively recruiting Syrian youth in Lebanon, taking advantage of their anger and disillusionment" (Sirin & Rodgers-Sirin 2015, 11). In line this with, UNESCO (2019B) also stresses the importance of "promoting education as a tool to prevent violent extremism". In a broader perspective, 'building resilience' is understood to be crucial to prevent violent extremism (Da Silva 2017; Ghosh et al. 2017; Basmeh & Zeitooneh 2018) wherein education is regarded as a crucial building block of resilience. Inherently linked to this, is the increasing understanding that the appropriate psychosocial support (PSS) should be provided for the students, in order to overcome possible (i.e. war-related) trauma and to build resilience to triggers of violent ideologies (EC 2019; UNESCO 2017). The current policy and academic debate on the importance of psychosocial support has been strongly influenced by a research published by Hobfoll (et al. 2007, 284), which argues that psychosocial support must focus on the promotion of (1) a sense of safety, (2) calming, (3) self- and community efficacy, (4) social connectedness, and (5) hope. Since then, various psychosocial interventions have been based on the '5 Hobfoll principles' (Wiedeman et al. 2014; Dückers 2013; ASPIRE 2018).

While a variety of projects are currently based on this premise, there is not a multitude of empirical proof on the ways in which access to education, and education itself, directly decreases (or increases) the possible triggers to partake in violent extremism (Da Silva 2017). It is moreover important to note that there is also various research indicating that education is a statistically insignificant predictor of becoming part of a violent extremist group (Da Silva 2017; Krüger & Malečková 2003; Korotayev et al. 2019). Berrebi (2007, 30) analysed the ways in which terrorism is linked to education among Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and even goes so far as to argue that "both higher education and standard of living appear to be positively associated with membership in terror organizations such as Hamas or PIJ and with becoming a suicide bomber". A study by the World Bank

(2016, 19) moreover made clear that most fighters from Daesh (ISIS) are well-educated. While the study indicates that 69% of the Daesh fighters finalized secondary education, a "lack of inclusion seems to be a risk factor of radicalization into violent extremism. Moreover, unemployment certainly has explanatory power (…)." In line with important push factors as social exclusion, a research conducted by Hamadeh (2018) indicates that the gap between the intended educational policy and the practice on the ground in Lebanon is growing. Human Rights Watch moreover conducted qualitative fieldwork in Lebanon among children, and their parents, who could not join in education (HWR 2016). The data indicated that there were numerous obstacles present, resulting in children unable to enjoy education, due to a variety of reasons, such as a lack of financial means or due to early child marriage.

While it is important to take these counter statements into account, there seems to be a general consensus that education is important in reaching young people (Da Silva 2017; Lee 2011; Korotayev et al. 2019; Gosh et al. 2017). It is therefore crucial to conduct further research on how best to address certain 'push and pull factors' that lead young people to radicalize. Moreover, it is crucial to obtain more empirical evidence that demonstrates what type of prevention is successful consistently across different contexts. Building forth on this, this research presents empirical evidence of the effect of (non-) formal education on school going children in Lebanon. To fully understand the reality, a context sketch of Lebanon is presented hereafter.

THIS RESEARCH PRESENTS EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE OF THE EFFECT OF (NON-) FORMAL EDUCATION ON SCHOOL GOING CHILDREN IN LEBANON

Context

As explained in the introduction, Lebanon makes for a good context to research the Dutch government's funding on education and its relation to PVE, as it is one of the Middle Eastern focal countries of the Netherlands. In order to fully understand this focus, first some background on the current ethnic and political situation in Lebanon will be provided. Then, the PVE strategies installed by the Lebanese government, in connection to the Dutch policy focused on Lebanon will be explained.

With almost a million registered (but an estimated 1.5 million (HRW 2018)) Syrian refugees in Lebanon (UNHCR 2019), the country is put under a lot of pressure. Throughout Lebanon, Syrians have been thrown into a state of illegality, impacting their accesses to health care, services, travel, and basic human needs (Fakhoury and Abi Raad, 2018). Not wanting to jeopardize their own places in power, the Lebanese government severely restricted the rights and accordingly the opportunities for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. One of the reasons for this is that "policy-makers have been concerned with the extent to which the settlement and potential naturalization of refugee communities – such as the Palestinians who have fled to Lebanon since 1948 – could impinge on the formula of sectarian power sharing" (Fakhoury and Abi Raad 2018).

Wanting to frame the situation as an 'impermanent' one, Syrians have been depicted by the government and the media as temporary guests (Fakhoury and Abi Raad 2018) who the Lebanese people need to be wary about. In line with this, a poll in 2013 showed that the majority of the questioned Lebanese citizens now perceive "the Syrian refugee issue to be a threat to security and stability" (Christophersen et al. 2013, 60). Even though clashes between Syrian refugees and Lebanese have seldom been reported, "tensions have occasionally erupted, fueling anti-refugee sentiment and triggering fears of domestic polarization over the refugee issue" (Fakhoury and Abi Raad 2018, 52). Anti-Syrian banners have been widespread throughout the country during the 2018 elections, accusing them of stealing jobs from the Lebanese population, while Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil has been spearheading a new campaign to send Syrians home for some time now (McKernan 2019). With the start of the 'WhatsApp'-revolution on October 17th 2019 (McGill 2019), Syrian refugees are increasingly the victims of the political unrest and financial instability (Asharq al-Awsat 2019), whereas the Lebanese population for the first time in history is fighting for the rights of all Lebanese, regardless of sect or religion (ICA 2020).
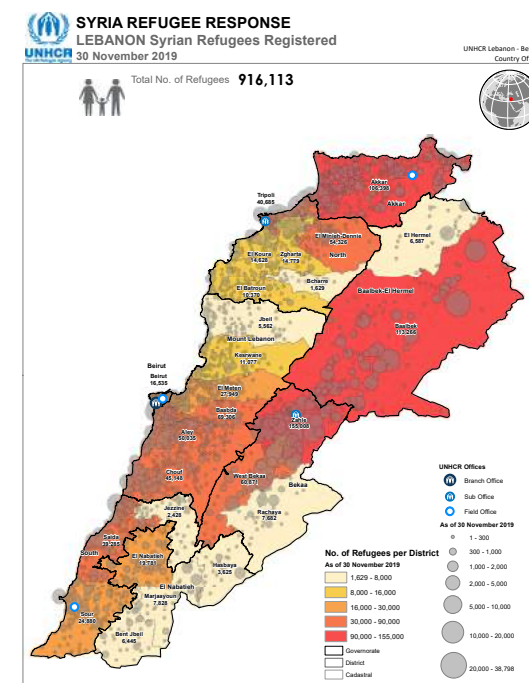
PVE STRATEGIES IN LEBANON

In Lebanon, PVE projects were funded and implemented by NGOs long before a national policy emerged (International Alert 2018). The Lebanese government announced it wanted to develop a national strategy for the Prevention of Violent Extremism in November 2016, with the aim of maintaining security and social peace, and safeguarding Lebanon's social diversity (UNESCO 2018). Accordingly, the Lebanese government officially adopted the National Strategy for Preventing Violent Extremism in March of 2018 (UNSCOL 2019). In the strategy, 'violent extremism' is defined as the spread of hatred that may lead to violence, the rejection of diversity, the use of violence to express oneself, and the behaviour that threatens values that ensure social stability (National Strategy for Preventing Violent Extremism 2018, 14). The prevention should according to the government be done through raising awareness about the risks of VE, monitoring transformations that may lead to VE and developing targeted responses (National Strategy for Preventing Violent Extremism 2018, 14).

The strategy entails 9 strategic pillars in which all the ministries have their own duties to fulfil, and programs to implement. The 6th pillar 'Education, Training and Skills Development', focuses on developing "educational curricula to protect youth from the risks of violent extremism and spread awareness among those involved in the educational process" (National Strategy for Preventing Violent Extremism 2018, 49). Within the same pillar, the Ministry of Public Health is tasked with evaluating "the effectiveness of life-skills education programs that are currently implemented in schools and in psychosocial support programs (...)", alongside of the Ministry of State for Displaced Affairs, who implements "psychosocial support programs for displaced children in primary, intermediate and secondary education, and activate vocational and technical training (...)" (National Strategy for Preventing Violent Extremism 2018, 52-53). It hence becomes clear that within the Lebanese national strategy, programs focused on life-skills and psychosocial support are deemed an important part of education.

The National Strategy appears to have been well-received by the international, NGO and policy community in Lebanon. The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL 2019) for example focuses on supporting the implementation of the PVE strategy. A yearlong research conducted by the Lebanese Centre for Policy Studies (LCPS) on localizing PVE-strategies in Lebanon concluded that "institutional reform and alleviation of structural poverty and marginalization are prerequisites to implementing an effective PVE Strategy" (LCPS 2019, 9). However, it highlighted that Lebanon's sectarian power-sharing features continue to hinder such efforts. Furthermore, following a research in December 2018,

Mapping by UNHCR Lebanon

International Alert recommends state institutions and policy-makers to implement the PVE national strategy, and to i.e. "support pilot actions to strengthen capacities of teachers and social affairs officers in schools to 'renounce marginalisation, disregard, stereotyping [...] and respect diversity and difference'" (International Alert 2018). According to the Euro-Mediterranean Study Commission, the field of anticipatory PVE efforts are however historically limited in Lebanon (2018). With the planned arrival of the national strategy, the commission states that the appointment of a "National PVE Coordinator and the decision to develop a national strategy point towards an increasing recognition that national and sub-national government has a role to play in early prevention responses" (EuroMeSCo 2018, 22). While there has been an overall positive reception of the national strategy, no official research has been published concerning the implementation of the strategy.

DUTCH POLICY IN LEBANON

The Dutch financial allocation for Lebanon from 2019 – 2022 amounts to at least €200 million (or approximately €50 million per year) for "basic assistance including social protection for refugees in need, education, and sustainable economic development and jobs for Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese citizens. Investing in prospects in Lebanon is key to the Dutch country-strategy for Lebanon in the next four years" (MCSL 2018, 2). More than half of the €200 million is allocated for education and protection projects, such as (vocational) education, work and income for young people and women in the region. The reasoning behind this is that education gives children a safe place to turn to, it can reduce early marriage, child labour and recruitment by armed groups (MCSL 2018 13). This latter goal specifically connects providing education to Preventing Violent Extremism in the Dutch policy strategy, since "more stability there, leads to more safety here" (Investing in Global Prospects 2018).

Moreover, the Dutch government's country-strategy in Lebanon is strongly connected to the PVE-plans of the Lebanese government, as it considers that the "underlying motives for radicalization remain a serious problem in the region, including Lebanon" (MCSL 2018, 9). It is noted in the MCSL that education is a powerful driver for development and it is one of the strongest instruments for "reducing poverty and improving stability" (MCSL 2018, 15). The link between PVE and education in the Dutch strategy is made clear with the focus on "supporting victims of terrorism and supporting teachers to signal emotional or behavioural problems including signs of radicalization or help youth develop critical thinking skills" (MCSL 2018, 9). The MCSL moreover strongly addresses that efforts to prevent terrorism and counter violent extremism are supported by i.e. service delivery to refugees, such as education. Following this, according to the Dutch strategy it is among others crucial to assure access to education (MCSL 2018). In terms of PVE, the Dutch strategy envisages results through psychosocial recovery support delivered to victims of (violent) extremism (MCSL 2018, 11). Between the Dutch and Lebanese authorities, a solid channel of P/CVE-related communication has been established to share information (MCSL 2018, 11). Nevertheless, the Dutch government gives high priority to catering to the need of war affected children through psychosocial support and sees it as one of their challenges in the 2019-2022 strategy (MCSL, 15).

In this research, we selected five organizations, resulting in seven case studies in Lebanon to examine these strategies and the hypothesis that investing in education will eventually lead to a more stable Middle East, Europe and Netherlands. There still is little theoretical evidence and knowledge on ways in which education can lead to stability, and how this relates to PVE, as mentioned in the theory of this report. In the following chapter, the methods for this research are presented.

Methods

We have adopted a multi-case study approach in order to answer the question what the effects are of educational interventions subsidized by the Dutch government on school-going children in Lebanon, in relation to preventing violent extremism. We have therefore selected a total seven case studies, by following the Dutch 'money trail' or a wider Dutch connection. Five case studies have been selected that receive Dutch subsidies: one at War Child, one at LOST and one at Mouvement Social (both of which are related to UNICEF) and two case studies at AVT-L. On top of that, the organization URDA has been selected due to its 'Dutch connection': it has an office in the Netherlands and hopes to broaden the Dutch government connection. At URDA, two case studies have come forth.
The case studies are spread out over the country, located in Arsal, Bekaa Valley, Saida, Tripoli and Beirut. In each case study – except for Arsal, due to time restrictions – at least four in-depth semi-structured interviews have been conducted with beneficiaries of the Dutch-subsidized projects, and at least 15 anonymous surveys have been filled in. In total, this means data has been gathered from 157 surveys and over twenty in-depth interviews.

THE SITUATIONAL-MODEL EXPLAINED

To provide the current activities funded by the Dutch government with contextual research, the Situational Action Theory (SAT) as coined by Wikström (2004) has been used as an inspiration for evaluating the effectiveness of education in relation to the intention of preventing violent extremism. The Situational Action Theory (SAT) originates from criminology and is traditionally used to analyse hypothetical crimes as moral actions. Along the lines of this situationalism, Wikström argues that violent crimes can best be explained by and understood through capturing the context of one's living environment (Wikström 2014; Wikström & Treiber 2016). The use of this model provides valuable insights into the causal process leading up to various forms of crime, as it both takes the 'person' in combination with the 'context' into account, when aiming to explain the effect of a certain 'exposure' on the perception-choice process.

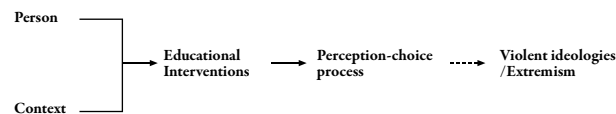**Analytical framework inspired by Wikström's SAT**

Figure 1. Model inspired by Wikström's SAT

Using the original SAT-model (Wikström 2014, 77) as inspiration, figure 1 depicts our analytical framework which we have applied throughout the research and which guided our analysis. As shown, we analyse the influence of the educational interventions both on the context and on the person. This is done first separately and accordingly in combination to one another. Consequently, we have analysed the impact this has on the perception-choice process. We want to underline that the use of this model should not be understood as an attempt to explain the likelihood of violent extremism for each individual child, but to analyse the influence of educational practices on the combination of the person and the context. The situational model has been chosen as it offers the possibility to isolate the 'exposure to educational interventions', and to observe its impact in relation to the various persons and contexts. Consequently, doing so offers the possibility to observe similarities and differences among children with different settings, or a different exposure.

METHODS IN PRACTICE

Within this research, the choice for qualitative methods has been made specifically because of the insights that these research techniques offer. The main methods used are semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, participant observation and policy/documentary analysis, thereby making use of triangulation to overcome possible biases and increase the validity of the obtained data. Triangulation is the use of more than one method to assure the validity and reliability of the obtained data (Bryman 2012). These methods thus are selected as their qualitative nature makes it possible to obtain deep, rich data from the field. As such, by using participant

observation in the refugee camps and at the schools, we gave meaning to the concepts of 'being there', and taking part in the everyday activities, rituals and interactions, to analyse both the 'explicit' and 'tacit' aspects of a society. Explicit aspects are those that people can communicate about, while tacit aspects of a society "largely remain outside our awareness or consciousness" (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011, 2). Through the use of participant observation, it becomes moreover possible to ask 'sensible' questions in the light of the specific events or society (Bernard 2006, 355). While participant observation offers the opportunity to obtain this thick societal data, interviews are additionally important in understanding the participants' perspective. One of most important aspects of participant observation is however the building of rapport[5] between the participants and the researchers. As, due to financial limitations, this research only included two weeks of fieldwork, it could be argued that it while a certain level of rapport had been present, a prolonged stay in the field could deepen the richness of the obtained data. The validity of the data could however be guaranteed through the use of the different methods, but also through the use of various techniques during the interviews as 'probing' or 'baiting'. These different techniques will be used as control mechanisms in the interviews, therewith deepening the reliability and validity of the obtained answers. Probing has been used to dig deeper, e.g. by remaining silent long enough, portraying naivety or echoing the answers from the students (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011). Baiting on the other hand implies acting like you already know something, which helped some children to open up.
These different techniques have hence been used as control mechanisms in the interviews, therewith deepening the reliability and validity of the obtained answers. The interviews have been conducted with the use of a translator.

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[5] Rapport is here understood as the creation of a relationship based on mutual trust and cooperation between the researcher and informant (Jorgenson 1989; DeWalt&DeWalt 2011)

Before entering the field, an anonymous questionnaire had been shared with all the selected educational centres/institutions in Lebanon. The questionnaire is meant to reflect the different case studies, and to observe the differences in which the variety of settings and individuals are exposed to various educational practices. Doing so has provided us with a wide overview of the case studies and has made it possible to observe similarities in background or educational practices, both within and between different case studies. The survey has been set up in cooperation with the education centres and incorporated their views on how best to ask the questions, in order to obtain the highest response rate possible.

ETHICS

Before distributing the surveys and conducting the interviews, the researchers obtained informed consent from all different educational centres/institutions. With a Terms of Reference (ToR) document, the research practices and goals were made clear for the study subjects. Furthermore, the parents of the interviewed children had beforehand been informed by the educational institutions of the researcher's aims and practices. Finally, to assure anonymity, all the names in the report have been changed and all the photos used in this report have been made with permission.
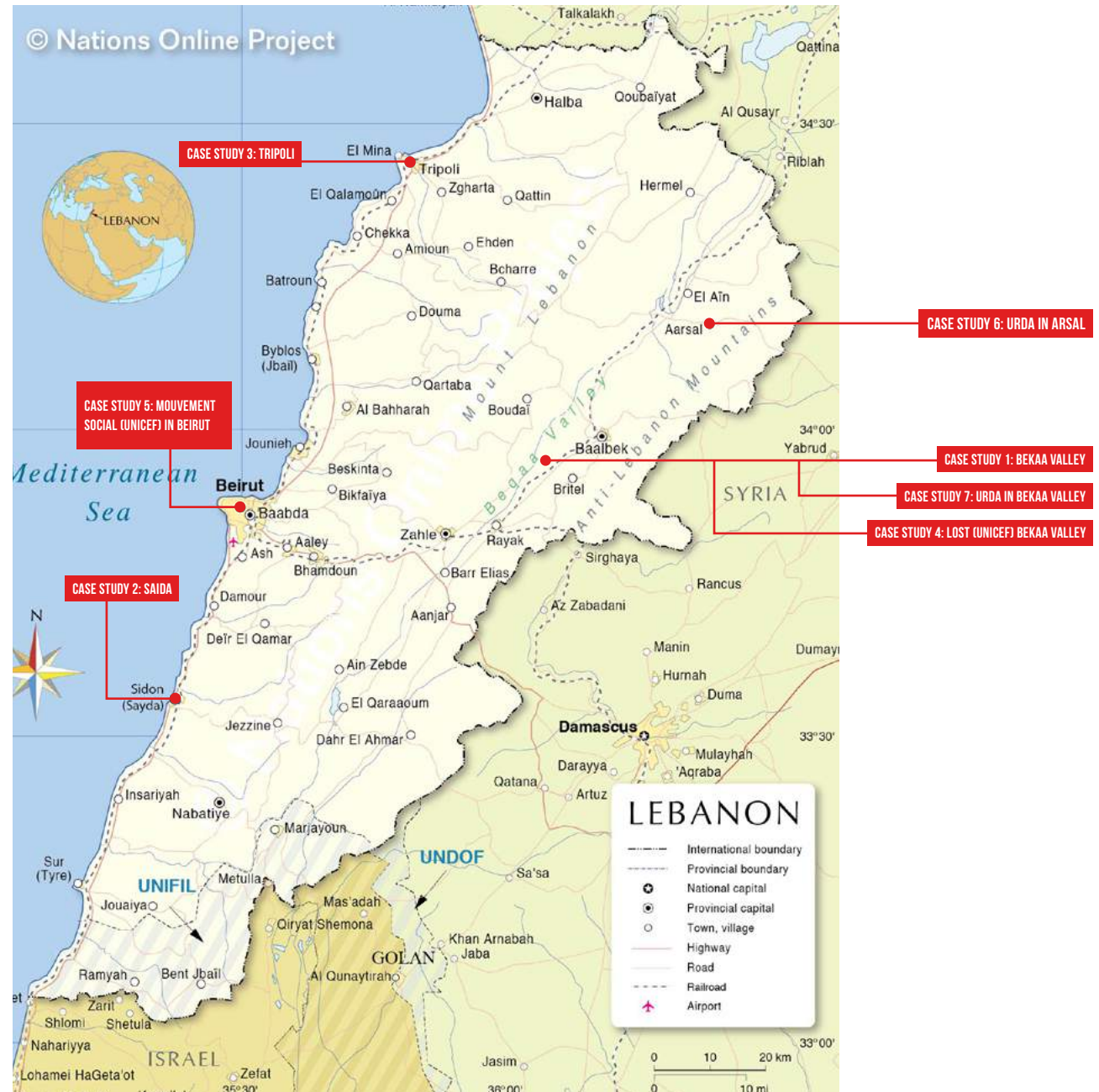
THE CHOICE FOR QUALITATIVE METHODS HAS BEEN MADE SPECIFICALLY BECAUSE OF THE INSIGHTS THAT THESE RESEARCH TECHNIQUES OFFER.

Empirical evidence

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Over the course of ten days, the researchers visited five organizations on different locations throughout Lebanon. As the setting is crucial when observing the exposure, the data is analysed following seven different case studies. Each case study is structured along the same lines; first, the general setting is explained. Here the background of both the organization and the social-geographical location within Lebanon are discussed. Consequently, the data obtained from the interviews, surveys and observations is analysed along the lines of the three components of the SAT: the 'context' and the 'exposure', and the 'person'. Each case study then includes a life-story: an in-depth situation sketch of one of the children spoken to, based on their interview. Finally, the most important general observations per case will be presented.

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CASE STUDY 3: TRIPOLI

CASE STUDY 6: URDA IN ARSAL

CASE STUDY 5: MOUVEMENT SOCIAL (UNICEF) IN BEIRUT

CASE STUDY 1: BEKAA VALLEY

CASE STUDY 7: URDA IN BEKAA VALLEY

CASE STUDY 4: LOST (UNICEF) BEKAA VALLEY

CASE STUDY 2: SAIDA

Case study 1: War Child in Bekaa Valley

INTRODUCTION

War Child, a Dutch NGO that receives (among others) funding from the Dutch MFA, currently has seven different projects spread out over Lebanon (War Child 2020). The organization is present in more than 40 locations in the country and works together with a variety of partner – mostly community-based – organizations, in order to strengthen their capacity to improve the lives of both refugee children from Syria or Palestinian communities, and children in the host communities. Education is an important component of their work, and War Child therefore offers a variety of educational programs, such as Can't Wait to Learn (in cooperation with various partners, as INTERSOS), and (A)BLN centres. The centre that is part of this research is an ABLN centre, located in Rayak in the Bekaa Valley, where about 350.000 refugees are currently living, the vast majority of them in refugee camps (UNHCR 2019; EC 2020) .

In this ABLN centre, each different group of pupils receives classes for 3 hours a day, and two days a week. Each cycle of education is 40 days in total, or 20 weeks. After each cycle, there is the possibility to transfer to ALP, which creates the opportunity to eventually bridge to formal education. In general, however, children attend two cycles of (A)BLN before possibly continuing with ALP. The children in the centre are between the ages of 10-14 years old. War Child performs outreach in the camps, and specifically looks for children that are either/or out of school for at least three years; working; stateless; engaged/have married early. These are considered the most vulnerable children, who can often only attend ABLN, as it provides children the opportunity to i.e. continue working next to the classes. In the centre a curriculum designed by War Child is used, and while there is a specific PSS component in the curriculum, PSS elements are mostly included in the life-skill classes.

There furthermore is the possibility for the case manager to refer specific children to 'focused PSS' classes in other centres.

There is also a child protection officer, who specifically focuses on the safety of the children. If it becomes apparent a child needs more attention, it is possible to refer the individual case to a psychologist as well.

RESULTS

Context

All the children spoken to at the War Child ABLN centre come from Syria. More than 75% of the children that have participated in the survey have been living in Lebanon for at least 3 years, or longer. In the interviews it became apparent that it is not uncommon for children to have lived in different places before arriving to the refugee camps they are living in now. All of the children have arrived with their families. Most of the pupils (70%) have indicated to be happy with the places they live in, but in contrary to other case studies, about 45% of the children indicate not to feel 'completely safe' at home. Farid (13) for example explains that while he feels safer here because there is no fighting, he doesn't feel completely safe because he misses his house and as he said: "I don't know when we will be kicked out of our tent". In line with other case studies, various children are scared to be kidnapped. For Amira, a 14-year-old girl, this became real when her cousin got kidnapped from their tent. Her family was asked to pay ransom, despite having no money at all. Luckily, a Lebanese couple helped them, and her cousin is safely back home again. While this scared Amira, and she doesn't like to go out alone, she feels safer than she did in Syria. At least here "I can go to sleep without being afraid of the sound of the airplanes", she said.

As this case study involves an ABLN centre, the likelihood that each pupil is working is very high. The five children spoken to during the interview all work in order to support their families. In the surveys it also becomes clear that financial issues are an obstacle to attend education. The children spoken to work long hours, in some cases also on school days. Tahir, who is 9 years old, works at a car wash, where is expected to show up even if he also needs to school on the same day. But in Tahir's words "I prefer to work, because now we even have barely enough money for food".

During the interviews, it becomes clear that while new friends are often made, some children miss home and their friends. Most children indicate to have friends to play with and talk to, even if they don't share their deepest secrets. For Tahir (9) it is however difficult to build a new network, especially as he does not regard people to be trust-worthy: "all of them are backstabbers". When digging a little deeper, he explains that while he used to have friends there, they

betrayed him and now he prefers to focus on work and his family.

Person

In the surveys it appears that only one person is not 'so happy', and the majority of the kids is 'very happy'. The interviews put these answers into perspective. While everyone indicates to be happy to be safe, there is clearly a lot of anger and sadness present within each child. As Amira explains, she would really like to be able to share her feelings with, for example, her sister, but she thinks that her sister will ignore her anyways. In that sense she feels alone, and really wants to go back to Syria "if things become safer". Salah (11) on the other hand, does not remember much from Syria, as he was only 3 years old when they fled to Lebanon. He has been working in a tiling company, and while he likes his work, he explains he would prefer to be full-time in school, as he really wants to become a dentist and he is aware he needs education to do so. But as he argues, "I will just pretend being a dentist until I am one".

Educational interventions

In the surveys it becomes clear that about half of the children has never attended schooling previous to the ABLN course. On top of that, the interviews paint a bleak picture for those that did attend school, as for all of them their educational background is a mosaic of different educational systems and institutions. Farid (13) attended one year of schooling in Syria, before he became an IDP and fled to a safer part of the country. There, he was able to attend another 3 years of education, before finally fleeing to Lebanon.

Again, Farid ('s parents) found another education option in Lebanon, but as Farid says "the bus stopped coming". He and his parents received no notice; the bus that brought him to school each day simply did not show up anymore. This happened a second time with another school, and now he has been in the War Child ABLN centre for about 3 weeks, where he hopes to stay. Salah, who is 11 years, has a similar story. He started school in Lebanon about 5 years ago, but the bus stopped picking him up after 4 weeks. It took him until 2 weeks ago, when he started the ABLN classes, to find another option for education. On the other hand, while he has 7 brothers, he is the youngest and the only one that goes (or has gone) to school. It is a major problem, whereby educational projects stop receiving funding,

either for the project altogether or for the transport alone. It is difficult to find options to attend school, and if these are found, it seems to always be a question if it is possible to obtain a diploma. It is however certainly not only a problem on the project/school-side: as becomes clear in the surveys, all of the children attending the War Child centre experience difficulties when going to school. The most common reason is the financial difficulties at home, as it often cannot be avoided that children also work in order to provide a living for their family. Next to that, a small percentage of the children indicate that it is 'too dangerous to leave home', which could refer to the kidnap-stories.

Once in school, the vast majority of the children is very happy to attend education, because as Farid says "school is fun". Over 80% of the children has received PSS-related activities at school, and most of them are of the opinion that this is 'very much' of value. Farid explains that during these classes they learn among others about different emotions and about the importance of sharing these feelings. Salah moreover states that during these classes he learns 'manners', or in other words, he learns how to react to people.

General conclusions War Child

→ Most of the pupils (70%) indicate to be happy with the place they live in, but contrary to other case studies, about 45% of the children indicate not to feel 'completely safe' at home.

→ With 12% answering 'a lot', students at the War Child program experienced the most violence from all the case studies.

→ In line with other case studies, various children are scared to be kidnapped.

→ Financial issues for attending education are the rule here; all the interviewed children work next to their education in order to support their families.

→ About half of the children never attended schooling previous to the ABLN-course. On top of that, the interviews paint a bleak picture for those that did attend school, as for all of them their educational background is a mosaic of different educational systems and institutions.

→ 'The bus stopped coming' is a major problem, whereby educational projects stop receiving funding, either for the project altogether or for the transport alone. It is difficult to find options to attend school, and if these are found, it seems to always be the question if it is possible to obtain a diploma. It is however certainly not only a problem on the project/school-side: as becomes clear in the surveys, all of the children attending the War Child centre experience difficulties when going to school. The most common reason is the financial difficulties at home, and thus it often cannot be avoided that children also work in order to provide a living for their family.

→ During the PSS-classes the pupils learn about different emotions and about the importance of sharing these feelings. Most of the them value this very much.

I WANT TO BECOME A SHEIK

When Tahir, together with his sister, walks into the room where we conduct the interviews, it is hard to believe he is only 9. He guides his sister, who is intellectually impaired, to her chair and explains to her what will happen. When Yara, who is 7 years old, realizes we have brought stroopwafels (Dutch caramel cookies) and that she can have some, she is happy enough and sits down. She is very communicative in her gestures and during the interviews it becomes very clear that Tahir is used to taking care of her. He has become the caretaker, and as it turns out, not only for his sister, but also for his family. Confidently Tahir starts explaining that he is happy to be living here with his family, especially in comparison to the South of Lebanon where they first arrived and lived for three years, because that place is "full of thugs, and we were being harassed by people on the street". On top of that, his neighbors in the camp here are nice, and the electricity is cheaper. He really hopes they can stay here, instead of going back to Syria. But his dad is currently in Syria and has been for the last 8 months, trying to rebuild their house.

"MAYBE AT THE MOMENT I WOULD PREFER TO WORK, BECAUSE THERE IS BARELY ENOUGH MONEY FOR FOOD."

When Yara makes it clear she'd like another cookie, he starts explaining that it is also easier for his sister here. People are more understanding, and here at the centre she can actually learn something and participate, instead of being at home all day. Upon asking him if he likes school he says: "Yes, I am happy here, it is good for my life to go here", then he pauses and continues "maybe at the moment I would prefer to work, because there is barely enough money for food". He works at a car wash, all days of the week. But he is lucky he says, because he has a good relationship with the owner. Despite this, he is very clear that if there would be no financial issues, he would want to come to school every day. Tahir is like an open book, unable to hide his emotions. Especially when we turn to the topic of his dreams. At first, he explains full of confidence that he wants to become a sheik, as "they have good hearts". But he quickly becomes angry, raising his voice to say that everyone in class laughs at him, not taking him seriously. These emotions he explains, he can't really share them with anyone. When he talks to his teachers, they simply tell him "to be patient", which only makes him angrier. We try to continue this conversation, but before we get a chance to do so, Tahir explains that they need to leave, as he really needs to start working.

AVT-L in Saida and Tripoli

INTRODUCTION

AVT-L, the abbreviation for 'L'Association libanaise des victimes du terrorisme – Liban' is a French-Libanese non-profit organization. Started in 2006 by Odette Helou after someone in her family witnessed a terrorist attack and subsequently experienced psychological issues, AVT-L is based around two goals: anti-radicalization and fostering positive change and confidence. To this end, the organization has a project on preventing violent extremism in schools throughout Lebanon, and a 3-day course for helping victims of terrorism to deal with their trauma. AVT-L furthermore trains teachers to talk to students and detect trauma(tic) behaviour. They train teachers in psychological methods and make sure they know how to deal with students. The workshops they offer are once a month and are three full days off-site. The organization consists of about 15 people and the psychological sessions are prepared by two in-house psychologists. The Dutch embassy is AVT-L's only funder, which is how this organization is connected to this research. The embassy is funding AVT-L for three years and they are currently in their second year.AVT-L works with different schools all over Lebanon, based on their interest in the program. It differs in which classes the AVT-L courses are given at every school. For this research, we visited a technical school in Saida and a public high school Tripoli, which is why this organization has two case studies. In the school in Saida, the PVE-classes were given in 2019 to the oldest children in the last three stages of high school. In Tripoli, we witnessed the students' very first AVT-L class. The classes are set-up as following:

Students in Tripoli play a game with a ball of wool during introduction

→ There is one introductory class that all the students get (which we saw in Tripoli). At the school in Tripoli, all 500 students get the classes, but this always differs and depends on the school. The school eventually chooses which groups receive the classes.

→ There's a minimum of three courses per class. These courses can be weeks or months apart.

→ Usually people refer AVT-L to different schools, that's how they get in touch. Thus, mostly by using their own network.

→ During the classes, the students have discussions while play games: stickers on forehead, throwing a ball of wool so that it forms a web, make a mind map to break the violence circle.

→ There is always someone present who is a victim of terrorism themselves. They talk about their experience, the pain and grief they went through, and how this changed their perspective (eventually for the better).

→ AVT-L tries to get teachers involved as much as possible, since they're the ones who work with the students all the time. This way, they can also intervene when there are issues that come up when AVT-L leaves.

Moreover, there is no compensation for victims of terrorism or their families in Lebanon. AVT-L advocates for this and tries to get (monetary or other forms of) compensation for them. The change AVT-L wants to foster is for children to dare to talk about their feelings, even if they make them uneasy and they've never learned how to, to provide them with the ability to say "I'm a victim" and express their feelings. They discuss stereotypes, how they often don't make sense and they make them think for themselves instead of repeating others.

RESULTS

As mentioned before, two schools that participate in the AVT-L program are visited for this research: a technical school in Saida and a public high school in Tripoli. These case studies are analysed separately hereafter.

Case study 2: Saida

INTRODUCTION

The technical school in Saida is located just outside the city centre. It is a private informal/technical school, run by an NGO called Al Mowassat or Social Relief and Welfare Association. Next to running this school – and others in the area – they have multiple NGO-projects, such as a kitchen to make Lebanese specialties they sell and a sowing factory where i.e. the clothes for school children are manufactured.

Context

At the school in Saida, 30 students filled out the questionnaire and four students (aged between 17 – 22) were interviewed. Most of the students are originally from the Saida area, only a couple are from outside Lebanon. Accordingly, most of them have been living in this area for more than 4 years or even their entire lives. Nevertheless, more than half of the interviewed students feel 'neutral' about living there (67%), which is reflected in the interviews; three out of the four students we spoke to say they are okay with living in Saida/Lebanon, but they want to move away once they are done studying. This has mostly to do with a lack of opportunities in the area and the economic situation in Lebanon in general. For example, Hala's (17) family has connections in Paris, France. She does not want to stay in Lebanon "because of the economic and political situation. Professionally, Lebanon is not a good place to be". She also thinks most of her friends will leave the country when they get the chance. More than half (53%) of the students say they feel 'neutral' about safety in their community and at home, which the second highest 'neutral' rating in all the case studies. Isra's (17) story describes the circumstances in the Saida-area perfectly. In 2013, violence between Hezbollah Shia and Sunni religious groups was taking place in the area where she lives, related to the war in Syria (McClatchy 2013). An extremist gang leader wanted to take power and eventually, the army arrested him. Back when this was happening, Isra did not feel safe where she lived, moreover since her house got hit by a lot of stray bullets. Now she does feel safe again. Additionally, 40% of the children say they feel 'very safe'. All of the 30 children say they have witnessed no violence at all.

Person

The questionnaire shows that 67% of the children feel 'neutral' about being happy, alongside 23% saying they are 'very much' happy. In their free time, they mostly hang out with friends and spend time on the internet. As opposed to other case studies, students who took the AVT-L classes spoke openly to us about their ideas on religion. 63% of them see themselves as 'neutrally' religious and 23% are 'not so much' religious. They moreover rate the importance of their religion as 'neutral' (47%) or 'very' (37%). When asked if they could be friends with students from a different religion, all the interviewees say they could. Religion is not important in their choice of friendships. When asked if the importance for them of being religious changed of the years, 40% answered 'neutral', 20% 'a little' and 17% 'very much'. This does show a change in religious importance for more than 1/3 of the students over the past years.

Educational interventions

In the case of the AVT-L classes, extremism and violence are the main discussed topics. All the students are in higher education, so the discussions are held on a more elevated level. Most of the children don't have difficulties going to school, but some have financial troubles (17%). When asked if they like going to school, 77% of the children answer 'neutral', which is the highest 'neutral' score in all the case studies. Nevertheless, 83% say they will finish school. Moreover, more than 2/3 of the students answered 'neutral' when asked if they feel safe in school, which is also a very high score compared to the other case studies.

Maryam (17) tells us that she feels school is nevertheless a safe place to talk about her feelings. She's in her second year in this school and was part of the AVT-L terrorism-education class last school year. They had five sessions throughout the year, once every two months. She liked the classes, they made her emotional and she learned about violence, bullying, the rule of law, and child marriage. According to her, "extremist violence is about war, for example when a Muslim kills a Christian". In class, the AVT-L teacher explains what terrorism and extremism entail, and someone who has been a victim of terrorism shares his or her story. For Maramm, violence is when people attack each other, both mentally and physically.

Terrorism is

"when someone makes an explosion go off in a crowded place, lots of people get hurt or die. Someone either told them to do this, or they are suicidal, or forced. It can have something to do with religion, but not necessarily. Because people from both sides die when the bomb goes off."

Maryam thinks that people who do this are sick of this life; in class they explained that people around them can help them with this feeling and comfort them. Maryam wants to help people more because of the class, and she says she sees more clear what extremism is or what someone goes through when they lose a loved one. Accordingly, Malikah (22) changed his behaviour because of the class. He stopped bullying or doing things that hurt other students. He says that he now even stands up for them. When asked what a terrorist is, he says it is a religious extremist who kills people for a bad cause. He saw religious extremism happen before, but says he only realized what it was after the classes. He now feels he'd even like to talk to religious extremists, to convince them how bad it is.

Talking about feelings in class does not seem like the norm in the classes where AVT-L taught; 23% of the students say they share their feelings 'not at all' or 'not so much'. They seem to have learned from the classes that this it is okay to do so, and might feel more encouraged to share. Because of all the things they learned, all four the interviewed children mentioned that the AVT-L classes should take place in every school in Lebanon. Nevertheless, 67% of the students said their dreams for the future did not change over the past years, meaning that the AVT-L classes did not have an impact on this. 17% of the students did say that their future dreams changed because of the events happening around them, such as the economy and the climate in the country.

General conclusions AVT-L Saida

→ Most of the students in Saida have been living in this area for more than 4 years or even their entire lives. Nevertheless, more than half of the interviewed students feel 'neutral' about living there (67%), which is reflected in the interviews; three out of the four students we spoke to say they are okay with living in Saida/Lebanon, but they want to move away once they are done studying.

→ More than half (53%) of the students say they feel 'neutral' about safety in their community and at home, which the second highest 'neutral' rating in all the case studies. Violence in area between Sunni and Shia groups contributed to this.

→ As opposed to other case studies, students who took the AVT-L classes spoke openly to us about their ideas on religion. Religious differences do not seem to keep them from having friends from other backgrounds.

→ When asked if they like going to school, 77% of the children answer 'neutral', which is the highest 'neutral' score in all the case studies. Nevertheless, 83% say they will finish school. Moreover, more than 2/3 of the students answered 'neutral' when asked if they feel safe in school, which is also a very high score compared to the other case studies.

→ There seems to be no consensus between the students about what it means to be a terrorist or a violent extremist; the terminology is used arbitrarily, and based on their own impressions and ideas.

→ 67% of the students said their dreams for the future did not change over the past years, meaning that the AVT-L classes did not have an impact on this.

THE EYES OF THE FUTURE

The first thing you notice when Isra walks into the room are her bright blue eyes. Sitting with her back against the wall in the small office, the sunlight shining on her face makes the colour even more striking. While introducing herself, her English sounds so superb that Bashir, our translator, has next to no work during this interview. When we give her a compliment on her English, she blushes slightly. "Oh, it's not that good. But I do watch a lot of American TV." Isra lives with her parents, brother and sister in Saida. She has been there since she was born, but she does not like it. "It's not a place where you can fulfil your ambitions", and by place she means Lebanon in general. Isra wants to be a speech therapist, but there are almost no work opportunities in that field in the country. Helping children is what she wants to do most, which is reflected in her friendships. She moved a couple of times from school to school, so she has friends in many places and in different layers in society. She likes this. But she only has one true friend, for eight years now. They are best friends because Isra really trusts her. She is not friends with people who talk badly about her.

Considering the two years Isra has been in this school, she really feels that learning about terrorism and extremism contributed to her knowledge. She even says she would have wanted to learn more about the victims of terrorism and how they deal with their grief. Some children did not take the class seriously, which disturbed Isra. "They should listen and pay attention, because it is a very important subject", she says with a stern look in her eyes, and adds even more serious: "I did not discuss the class with my peers afterwards, because they did not take it seriously."

The class was completely about terrorism, according to her. Not about violent extremism, because that is something else. "Violent extremism can happen in families and between random people, because it is not based on an ideology. And it can be for a good cause, unlike terrorism." We discuss what according to her a good cause is, and she eventually says that this is when an act is committed with everyone's

rights in mind, such as protesting. Physical violence can never be for a good cause, she adds. In 2013, Isra's house got hit by a lot of stray bullets when Sunni and Shia religious groups were fighting in her Saida neighbourhood. But she still does not think they are terrorists, because the groups who were fighting did not have one common goal, which terrorist groups usually have. She was scared and did not feel safe. Isra does feel safe now, but she does not think the situation is really stable. For this to change, "people in charge should work for everyone's wellbeing, and not just for their own religious group". That's part of why she wants to leave Lebanon; next year she is going to study in Canada. And she is planning to stay there.

IN 2013, ISRA'S HOUSE GOT HIT BY A LOT OF STRAY BULLETS WHEN SUNNI AND SHIA RELIGIOUS GROUPS WERE FIGHTING IN HER SAIDA NEIGHBOURHOOD.

Case study 3: Tripoli

INTRODUCTION

Tripoli is the largest city in northern Lebanon and the second-largest city in the country. The city is predominantly Sunni and has a rather conservative image compared to the rest of Lebanon (Middle East Eye 2019). Tripoli is furthermore characterized by the long-running Bab al-Tabbaneh–Jabal Mohsen conflict, which was a recurring conflict between Sunni and Alawite Muslims in two residential areas, rivalling since the Lebanese Civil War in 1976. Sectarian violence flared up in the area since the Syrian Civil War between 2011 and 2017 (Reuters 2014). In Tripoli, we visited a publicly funded and very well-maintained public high school in an Alawite (Shia) area. The area is less conservative than other parts of the city. The children we interviewed just had their first class with AVT-L, which we got to witness. All the children in this school will eventually receive the classes.

Context

At the school in Tripoli, 20 students filled in the questionnaire and we interviewed 4 students after they attended their first AVT-L class. All the children in this class are born and raised in Tripoli. 90% of them lives in Jabal Mohsen, the earlier mentioned Alawite area in Tripoli, and has been there for most of their lives. 65% of the students say they feel 'neutral' about living there, and 30% is 'happy' about it. Then 'neutral' rating is the second highest in all the case studies in this research. 15% of the students say they feel 'not so much' safe in their communities, which is a comparable percentage with the refugee children we questioned. This has to do with the clashes in the area the past decades. Adnan (17) says he has never felt totally safe living in Tripoli, because of the clashes in the area. His previous school was further away from home, so he now feels safer going to and coming from school. Similarly, Nada (14) feels safe now, but she did not five years ago during the clashes. Her house was bombed and most of her family's money went up in flames in the fire. Firemen then stole many of their belongings, after which the family went broke and her dad got into a deep depression. All this made her – naturally – feel very unsafe.

Furthermore, 35% of the students are 'neutral' about the safety-situation in their area. Moreover, 15% of the students say they witnessed a 'neutral' amount of violence and 10% say they witnessed 'a lot' of violence; this is the second highest score, next to children we questioned at the War Child program. This, once again, has to do with the violent clashes in the area.

Person

In the questionnaire, 70% of the students mentioned they are 'neutral' when it comes to their happiness. The children we interviewed are on the spectrum from neutral to happy; Maram (16) says she feels happy in the area where she lives, because there is a real community feeling. "Everyone knows each other and they help each other when necessary. I like the trust that this feeling gives me. And I have many friends in the area."

Moreover, 65% of the students is 'neutral' concerning religion, and 15% rate it as 'not at all' important to them. Nevertheless, 40% deem religion very important and only 15% saw a 'very' big change in their importance towards religion over the last couple of years. Ahad (16) says that he has about 10 good friends, who are all from different backgrounds and religions. A friend, according to him, "is someone who understands him and will defend him".

Educational interventions

Only 50% of the questioned children like going to school, but nevertheless, 95% percent say they want to finish school. 75% feels 'neutral' about their safety at school, which is the highest score in the entire study population. Adnan (17) says there are a couple of teachers that would understand his issues that he would talk to about this. Furthermore, 25% of the students say they can share their feelings 'a little' in class. The value of the AVT-L 'PSS' class is 'neutral' for 45% of the students, with 25% appreciating it 'very much'. Nada (14) says she liked the AVT-L class, but she already shared her emotions before; she's not ashamed to share what's on her mind. She does believe it is important to have these classes, to hear each other's stories and learn from one another. Maram (16) feels that she does not always know how to share her feelings, and she thinks that the AVT-L classes will help her in doing so. "Sharing makes me feel safe

and it is important for everyone in schools to learn this", she says. Maram furthermore believes that PVE-classes can help prevent violent extremism, because you can let go some of your negative emotions and anger when talking to others.

Lastly, because of the event happening around them, 25% of the students say they have different dreams for their future than before; 40% say they still want to do the same. Maram's (16) biggest wish is that there will be peace in Lebanon and the countries surrounding it. And she wishes to live without fear completely one day.

General conclusions AVT-L Tripoli

→ 65% of the students say they feel 'neutral' about living there, and 30% is 'happy' about it. Then 'neutral' rating is the second highest in all the case studies in this research.

→ 15% of the students say they feel 'not so much' safe in their communities, which is a comparable percentage with the refugee children we questioned. This has to do with the clashes in the area the past decades.

→ 15% of the students say they witnessed a 'neutral' amount of violence and 10% say they witnessed 'a lot' of violence; this is the second highest score, next to children we questioned at the War Child program.

→ 75% feels 'neutral' about their safety at school, which is the highest score in the entire study population.

→ 25% of the students say they have different dreams for their future than before, due to events happening around them. This is the second highest score in all the case studies.

EXTREMISM BY A THREAD

All the students in the class have gathered in a big room. The entire building has an air of medieval sophistication, with its stone walls and high ceilings. AVT-L's founder Odette Helou summons the kids to form a big circle, while rummaging around in a box of stuff. Laughing and joking, they comply and form a ring in the corner of the room. Odette gives a ball of wool to one of the students and explains that he has to throw it to one of his fellow students, while holding a piece of thread. But before he can throw it, he has to say the first word that comes to his mind about terrorism. "Death", he says, and throws the ball. A girl across from him catches it. "Anger", she says, and she throws the ball to the next student, while holding a piece of thread.

The symbolism in this game is to show the commonalities and the relations between people in real life. Odette explains that the kids need to learn how to let their anger and emotions out, through sharing their stories about the bad situations they witnessed. An AVT-L staff member starts out, by sharing her story. "I lost my son to religious extremist violence", she says. "I'm a Christian and a Muslim killed my boy". She explains that at first, she was really mad and believed that everyone from religions other than Christianity wanted to kill "her kind". At some point, she realized that being angry was not helping her process and move on. She dealt with her grief, bit by bit. "Does anyone else have a similar story?", she asks. The class is silent for a when, and then a girl steps forward and explains how she lost her uncle to religious violence. She had a really hard time, but is learning to deal with it now.

Odette then explains what violent extremists want: to instil fear in others. She tells the students to not give into this and keep sharing their feelings. Odette and her colleagues talk to some of the students, who come up to them after the plenary part of the class. They also hand out their business cards to the kids   who bravely spoke up and shared their stories. "If they ever want a listening ear and share more, they can always reach us".

ODETTE EXPLAINS THAT THE KIDS NEED TO LEARN HOW TO LET THEIR ANGER AND EMOTIONS OUT, THROUGH SHARING THEIR STORIES ABOUT THE BAD SITUATIONS THEY WITNESSED.

Case study 4: LOST (UNICEF) in Bekaa Valley

INTRODUCTION

The local NGO LOST, or Lebanese Organisation for Studies and Training, is a partner of UNICEF and is situated in Saadnayel. The NGO works within a variety of sectors, such as livelihood, protection and the environment, and has been running education programs for twenty years, to provide "children, youth, and adolescents (…) with learning, knowledge, and skills" (LOST 2020). LOST is moreover a member of the MEHE[6] sub-committee for education. In the town of Saadnayel, there are about 25.000 refugees living in informal settlements. The children attending the (A)BLN classes at the LOST centre all live in tents as well. The living conditions in these settlements are rough, especially during wintertime (Najjar 2019).

The education centre hosts solely Syrian refugee children between the age of 10 and 14. Each enter a specific BLN-cycle or ABLN-cycle, which are 3 to 4 months in duration. There are two cycles per year, and those who finish the cycle successfully can go to ALP, which provides the opportunity to catch up with the Lebanese curriculum and is hence a 'bridge' to the formal education system. Last year more than a hundred made it that far. The (A)BLN classes are designed in cooperation with UNICEF and approved by MEHE. Next to English, Arabic and math, the children also receive life-skills classes, which hold a PSS related focus. On top of this, there is a psychologist who visits all kids who need more support in all centres. At this moment, there is one child in the centre that receives psychological support. LOST performs the outreach themselves, as they go to the surrounding refugee camps to find kids between the age of 10-14 who need education. There is a bus from the camps to the LOST centre daily, for which the parents are not charged. The transportation is, among others, paid for by funding from UK AID and UNICEF. The main funding for the LOST educational centre comes from UNICEF, which receives unearmarked funding from the Dutch government.

6 Ministry of Education and Higher Education of Lebanon

RESULTS

Context

The surveys indicated that the majority of the children has been living in Lebanon for at least 3 years. A number of them moved around within Lebanon, before 'settling' in Saadnayel. Some of them, like Farida (12), first lived in a house when arriving to Lebanon. Most likely due to financial reasons, the family now lives in a tent located on the land of a farmer and not in a refugee camp. This sight is quite common in Lebanon, where certain landowners let families live on their land in return for labour. While in the surveys most children tell us that they are happy to be living where they are, it becomes clear in the interviews that there is a fear of 'being kidnapped' among the children. While it is difficult to highlight where this fear comes from – as we hear it throughout Lebanon – it demonstrates that the children do not feel completely safe. At the same time, Aaliya, a 12-year-old girl, explains that "people from church came to my camp saying bad things about Mohamed (the Prophet, Ed.)". As Aaliya explains, the visitors said that Islam is not the true religion, but Christianity is. This made her aware that she finds it difficult to become friends with people that are Christian, as she feels that she can't trust them to be kind to her. While she in general feels safe in the camp, she is "just angry at those people who came to my camp". But, living in the camp is also a great opportunity to make a lot of friends. Mahmoud (13) has a lot of friends in the camp, even more than at school. He loves to play with them and have them around. Aaliya also explains that her friends in the camp understand her better than those at school; she feels that people in the camp can relate to her stories. This is possibly related to the classes provided by the international NGO Ummah Charity (Ummah 2020). Ummah organises PSS sessions for children within refugee camps, in which among others the importance is taught of sharing feelings and experiences.

Person

When asked in the survey, 75% of the children indicate to be 'very happy' at the moment and none of them say they are unhappy. While the interviews do not necessarily contradict this, it becomes clear that (logically) most of the children struggle with feelings of anger and sadness. This is line with the unders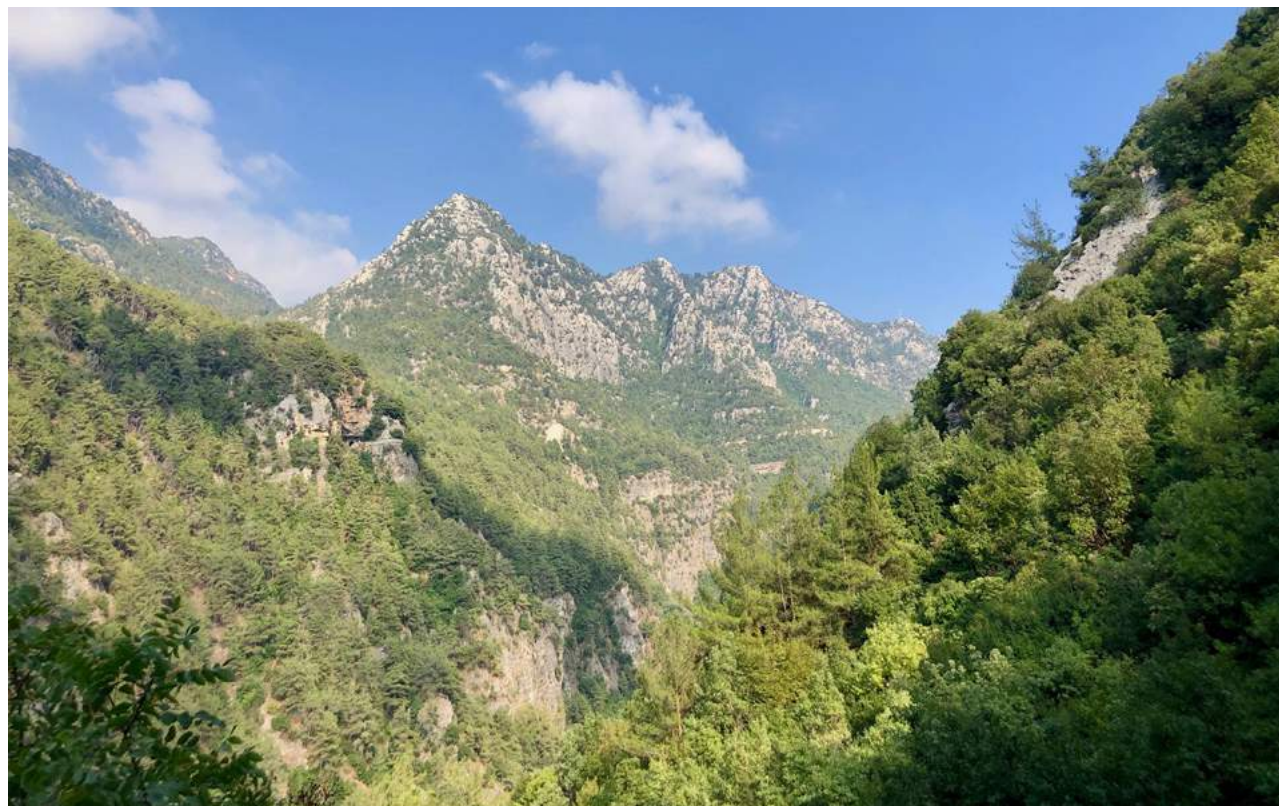tanding that most children find it hard to share their feelings. On top of that, as becomes clear in the interviews, trusting 'new people' is hard at times. As Farida indicates, she is very happy with her best friend because she can fully trust her, as opposed to other people who often "talk behind my back". She would like to make more friends, though only if they are loyal to her. Nahla (12) on the other hand is clear that "everyone is my friend", because she would not want to upset anyone. A general shared notion is that all explain to not feel 'so scared' anymore. In line with this, Aaliya says that she has felt very scared, especially after their house in Syria was hit by a rocket. She is happy that now she doesn't have to be afraid of that anymore. In certain ways, education also provides the opportunity to dream about the future again. The surveys make clear that most of the children want to either become a doctor, or a teacher. The interviews show that these choices are very much linked to experiences; Aaliya explains she recently realized wants to become a doctor to help and cure people. At the same time, all of interviewees explain that despite all career possibilities, their biggest dream is for Syria to become safe and for them to be able to return.

Educational interventions

None of the children attending the LOST educational centre have followed education higher than the first grade of primary school (most of them back in Syria). Consequently, over 75% of the pupils indicated to be very happy to be able to attend the classes, as school is generally understood to be very important. Besides that, going to school offers a certain stability, a reason to leave the camp. As Nahla explains, even though she has only been in school for a week, it has been a big change to be able to "meet new people, chat and to just go there".

During an interview, the 13-year-old Mahmoud explained that while dreaming of becoming a math teacher, this is first time in 7 years that he can actually attend education. This is not for lack of trying: he tried to apply for various schools, but was rejected on the basis of his age, and the foreseen gap in the curriculum. Contrary to most others, Farida managed to attend another educational institution (The School of Hope) before coming to LOST. But after the school closed down due to a lack of funding, she once again was without education. Financial issues also play a role in the children's capacity to attend education, which is reflected in the surveys showing that all of the students have financial difficulties while attending school. According to the centre manager, a lot of children do not attend school in order to work and help in maintaining the family. The surveys show that more than half of the children that have received psychosocial support at school (in the form of life-skills classes) think it is 'very useful'. During our interviews it became clear that it is not always clear to the children what PSS means, or in what way life-skills classes can teach them about the importance of sharing their feelings. At the same time, both Nahla and Aaliya explain that the organization Ummah, came to their camp. Both of them would be very happy if they would also learn this at 'school'. While Mahmoud has, according to him, not received any life-skills classes, he has started to talk to his teacher about his feelings. This because he feels comfortable with his teacher, and it feels good to share and be able to talk about it. Especially because his friends would mostly tell him to simply "forget it", which he can't.

General conclusions LOST

→   While in the surveys most children tell us that they are happy to be living where they are, it becomes clear in the interviews that there is a fear of 'being kidnapped' among the children – like at the War Child case.

→   75% of the children indicate to be 'very happy' at the moment and none of them say they are unhappy. While the interviews do not necessarily contradict this, it becomes clear that (logically) most of the children struggle with feelings of anger and sadness.

→   over 75% of the pupils indicated to be very happy to be able to attend the classes, as school is generally understood to be very important: it offers stability and a reason to leave the camp.

→   Highest score of change in dreams over the past years because of classes, compared to other case studies: 30%.

→   All of the students have financial difficulties while attending school. According to the centre manager, a lot of children do not attend school in order to work and help in maintaining the family.

→   During our interviews it became clear that it is not always clear to the children what PSS means, or in what way life-skills classes can teach them about the importance of sharing their feelings.

RUNNING HOME AFTER SCHOOL

We are sitting at a big white plastic table in a spacious hallway, just outside the front door of the LOST education centre. While this seems contradictory, it is the quietest place in the building. As the last of the four interviews, 12-year old Nahla walks into our improvised office and sits down across from us. She starts of a bit shy, but quickly opens up when we ask her about her hometown, Hama. Nahla was happy in Hama, she had a good life, but "when I saw people on the street with guns, I realized the war had really started". During the early stages of the Syrian Civil War in 2011, the Siege of Hama made it impossible for her family to leave. During her time in Hama, she managed to go to an informal school. "The classes always went fast, there was not much time to study", Nahla explains with hanging shoulders. When we ask her why, she explains that everyone was eager to finish the classes and run home again, hoping to not get hit by a bomb or a rocket in the meantime. Nahla's eyes tear up when she tells us her grandparents were killed when their house got bombed. With a soft smile, she says how happy she is, to now live here with her family because at least "I don't feel scared to go to sleep at night".

While she is still angry because of all that happened, Nahla explains that she does feel better than she did before. A big help in this, were the (PSS) classes provided in the camp by Ummah, as "they would help us forget the past, so that we can work towards the future". While she really likes coming to LOST, and learning new subjects, Nahla feels that it would help her a lot to also learn at school how to share her feelings, feel safe and think about the future. When asking about her biggest dream, Nahla smiles and says "I really want to do something with arts", but while saying this, her expression changes. She is quiet, and then says "but as long as the war doesn't stop, I do not want to become an artist. I want to become a doctor, to help to people from Syria that are hurt".

EVERYONE WAS EAGER TO FINISH THE CLASSES AND RUN HOME AGAIN, HOPING TO NOT GET HIT BY A BOMB OR A ROCKET IN THE MEANTIME.

Case study 5: Mouvement Social (UNICEF) in Beirut

INTRODUCTION

Mouvement Social (MS) has a long history and officially registered as an organization in 1961. MS has a broad focus and aims to "build a fair and humane society, to improve the citizenship and autonomy of the underprivileged through socio-economic development projects and to implicate Lebanese youths in the development and improvement of their society" (Mouvement Social 2020). In doing so, education is one of their focal points. There currently are 5 centres from Mouvement Social in Beirut, and there are more centres all over Lebanon. While Mouvement Social receives funding from various donors, UNICEF is one of the main donors. The centre is also connected with among others the Dutch Government. When it appears that one donor won't be able to cover all the costs, or that changes might have to be made, new donors are applied to in order to prevent the 'bus from stopping to come'.

The centre that functions as the case study for this research exists for about 35 years already and is located along a bustling street in Beirut's eastern suburb Bourj Hammoud, in an area dominated by various religions and sects. About 25 percent of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon reside in or around the capital Beirut (UNHCR 2019). Beirut's eastern suburb Bourj Hammoud is known to host many Syrian refugees: within Nabaa, a specific area within the suburb, 63% of the population is of Syrian descent, as opposed to 33% with Lebanese origins (UN Habitat 2017). While Bourj Hammoud is generally referred to as the Armenian neighbourhood[7], the area is densely populated and accommodates low income population groups with diverse religious, ethnic and political backgrounds (UN Habitat 2017, 3).

In the centre, formal education was originally provided for Lebanese children from middle or lower classes, but their focus has over the years spread out to include refugees. The centre therefore now offers both technical (or 'formal') education and (A)BLN, and the latter is

[7] Refugees of the Armenian genocide settled in the area in the 1930s (Randa Nucho 2017, 1)

provided as an opportunity to bridge to formal education. The centre currently has about 500 students who attend different programs. The (A)BLN curriculum, including the life-skills classes, is designed by UNICEF (as is the case with LOST). Next to technical and BLN education, vocational and cultural training is also provided to help pupils from different backgrounds to understand and accept each other. As Mouvement Social is a non-sectarian centre, it is impossible to discuss religious affiliation in-depth, or to refer to 'extremism' in educational trainings (as life-skills classes). Therefore, while there is work done on programs that prevent violence and everybody learns about 'the other' (e.g. in a project with people that are victims of war), the literal term 'extremism' is not used. There is also a professional program that provides focused-PSS for children and their parents. Focused-PSS consists of smaller groups (maximum 15 children per group) with more attention for the individual cases. This is the same for the parents. The most vulnerable children from the BLN classes are selected to attend the focused PSS classes. About 60 of the kids here receive focused PSS and the program is led by case managers, who can refer them to the right treatment if needed.

RESULTS

Context

Both the surveys and the interviews indicate that the majority of the students have been living in the area for at least four years. In contrary to most other case studies, almost all children live in a house or apartment, instead of a tent. Living in the city and in close proximity to services provides the kids with the opportunity to for example go to internet cafes. Abbas (12) explains, he loves to go to internet cafés to play videogames with his friends, especially the popular shooter-game PUBG (PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds). Only 40% of the respondents indicate to feel 'happy' about living in the area and on top of that, only 20% feel safe. These numbers are explained further in the interviews and it becomes clear that while kids feel relatively safe at home, it is not an easy area to live in. First of all, the feeling of safety depends on the area of Bourj Hammoud in which they live. A part of the neighbourhood is notorious for being unsafe. Dahab (14) lived in this specific 'thug' area for years, where she did not feel safe going on the streets. Since a year however, her family has been living in a better area, which makes her happy.

Another reason why children indicate to be scared, next to the more common notion of the possibility of kidnapping, regarding their working schedule. A national law against labour violations makes is more difficult for undocumented refugees to work illegally (HRW 2016; Rabah 2019; Khodr 2019). In other words, there is a lot more control in the workplace to find illegal workers. Especially in the capital, these checks have become notorious. As a result, children are often forced into labour in order to sustain a living for their family. This because, contradictory, children's documents are not often checked. And, to eliminate the risks even further, children are asked to work late shifts, as the checks mostly happen during office hours. Abbas, who has been working as a hairdresser for a number of years already, is a victim of this new rule. He has changed his shifts so that he now finishes work at 12:30 am, virtually eliminating the risk of being 'caught' as an illegal worker. This means he walks home in the middle of the night, and as he explains "that walk is always scary, I mostly try to just walk fast".

The difficulty of navigating life in the complex social setting of Bourj Hammoud also comes forward in the story of Farouk, a 14-year-old boy. When Farouk is asked how he feels about living in the area, he explains that while he feels accepted, he feels a bit unsafe when the kids are 'picking on him'. He then pauses and blurts out that "at least I am Christian and not Muslim. I go to church every Sunday. This feels better, because it is the true religion". When asked about his name, which is clearly Muslim, he shrugs and says that just happened to be. It is clear he is uncomfortable, so no further questions are asked. Afterwards however, the centre coordinator explains us that Farouk is certainly Muslim, and not Christian, but that she can imagine his family has converted to Christianity, as the church helps Christians to 'get out of the country' (Syria). At the same time, being Muslim in a Christian dominated area is difficult, and Farouk is not the only one who is taught by his parents to refer to himself as Christian, and to leave his Muslim identity at home. It did not become clear if Farouk actually converted to Christianity or he just says he is a Christian to integrate more in the area.

Person

The surveys show that in contrary to most other case studies, only a third of the children indicate to be very happy, while the others are either a little happy, or 'neutral'. By far most of the children are happy to hang out with family or friends. The complexity of navigating social life in such a diverse community becomes apparent in the interviews, where some children clearly express their preferences regarding who to befriend. In general, most children indicate that a friend is someone you can trust and play with, regardless of their background. Abbas however explains that he once had a friend who was Shia, but that this friend beat him up. As he explains "the Shia have power, and I don't like their actions, so I don't want to be friends with a Shia again". On the other hand, there are also children that, because of their diverse background, have a lot of different friends too. Jalil, an 11-year old Kurdish boy, explains that in Syria he had a lot of friends with different backgrounds. Here, he also has a lot of different friends, though a lot of them are Armenians because there are a lot of Armenians in the neighbourhood. As Jalil says "I wish I could play with them always, but I can't. I need to work".

It is interesting to see that while more than half of the children believe they won't finish education, there is a wide variety in dreams, for example: becoming a teach, football player, seamstress, engineer or even a piano player. In the interviews it becomes clear that a lot of the career-related dreams result from past experiences, such as Mahdi (12) dream to become a soldier. Upon asking why a soldier, he explains that there is a "lot of trash on the streets and it is not safe at night. I want to help change that". Nazim (14) on the other hand always wanted to be an English teacher, but now that he has been working as a shoemaker for at least 3 years, he has realized he really likes doing that too. For now, he would love to become a shoemaker. Jalil wants to become an engineer, because then he can help to rebuild Syria.

Educational interventions

The children who attend the (A)BLN classes at Mouvement Social clearly have an infrequent background when it comes to education. The surveys show that all children encounter some obstacles in their search for education; either financial difficulties, 'being needed at home', or the fact that it is too difficult to leave home. It becomes

clear that 40% of the children believe that they will not be able to finish their education. It is a big mosaic of educational experiences, where a lot of children have received various forms of education over the last years. Lina, an 11-year-old girl, for example attended Kurdish education for some time in Afrin, where she was born. When it became too dangerous to stay there, her family fled to Kobani, where she again received Kurdish education. Unfortunately, it did not take long before they were forced to move to Aleppo, where she was not able to attend any form of education. While Lina explains she reached 7th grade while in Syria, Kurdish education is considered unofficial education, and no certificates were handed out. As a result, she is not considered to be on the right level to join formal education in Lebanon and has to first attend BLN classes to bridge the 'alleged gap'. Besides that, a number of the interviewed children do not only attend BLN or ABLN classes, but also work up to 7 days a week. Nazim (14) is an interesting example, as he goes to BLN class (4 days for 3-4 hours) and next to that works in a shoe factory for 5,5 days.

On top of that, it is also complicated for refugee children to find education. First of all, because most of the refugees that arrive in Lebanon depend on the public education system in Lebanon; a system that was already weak before the Syrian crisis (HRW 2016). The influx of Syrian refugees has strained the public schooling system even further and as a consequence a 'second shift' of school hours has been implemented by the MEHE. Despite this, there is a shortage of funding (or at least, the funding has not arrived to where it should) and teachers are working over hours without being paid (UNICEF & UNHCR 2019). As a result, public schools are full. The UNHCR furthermore notes that there is serious discrimination towards Syrian refugees joining the public-school system, and this "is sometimes fuelled by the parents of Lebanese and Jordanian children, who fear that Syrian students are lowering the standard of education or putting their children's health at risk" (Baldwin 2013). Next to this, attending education is complicated by the necessity to obtain a salary and the complexity of combining school and work. In line with this, 14-year old Farouk only recently started the ABLN course after having not been in school up to 4 years. During those years he tried to find education but it was always complicated by his job. Once he

worked in a factory and went to school, but when his boss didn't let him attend the classes, the NGO providing the education asked his boss why Farouk wasn't allowed to come to school. His boss seemed to understand, but after the NGO-worker left Farouk was fired. As a result, he is now working in the shoe factory with his father. He is happy there, but he has to go to work after school each day. He comes to class two days a week but goes to work as soon as the class is over.

Both the surveys and the interviews show that at least 80% of the children in the educational centre have received some form of PSS. While the surveys show that about a third of the students is 'very happy' with the PSS classes[8], the interviews give more insight in these answers. Every child spoken to is very positive about the PSS components in the life-skills classes; the general notion is that it helps to create a safe environment in which sharing is motivated. Mahdi (12) explains that he used to throw stuff and shout a lot when he got angry, but because of the classes he learned how to "talk about my feeling instead of just being angry". He would really like to receive more classes like that. Lina (11) has learned a lot about what violence exactly is. This also means that she now knows not to discriminate people, because it causes pain. Similar to Mahdi, she explains: "I used to be very angry because of the war in Syria, but now that I started sharing this, it became less". Nazim (14) however has always been a very open person and feels that while he personally might not have changed a lot, he really liked to learn about conflict resolution, because now he knows how to calm an angry person down. Life-skills classes helped him to understand and solve certain problems faster. On the other hand, Abbas has not received life-skills classes yet, but has heard about it and he would really like to receive them in school. He explains that he often gets very angry when someone for example curses him and he would like to "learn how to deal with that, because now I mostly just become very angry".

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[8] None of the students is unsatisfied with the classes, the other 2/3 of the students feels 'neutral'

General conclusions Mouvement Social

→ Only 40% of the respondents indicate to feel 'happy' about living in the area and on top of that, only 20% feel safe. This is related to the unsafety of some Bourj Hammoud-areas, the more often heard notion of the possibility of kidnapping, and regarding their working schedule; children are often forced into labour to sustain a living for their family, since adults are more frequently checked for papers. The kids work many late shifts, so they are afraid when walking home alone at night.

→ Only a third of the children indicate to be very happy, while the others are either a little happy, or 'neutral'.

→ The complexity of navigating social life in a diverse community like Bourj Hammoud becomes apparent in the interviews, where some children clearly express their preferences regarding who to befriend, unlike in many of the other case studies.

→ 40% of the children believe that they will not be able to finish their education, which is a high percentage comparted to the other case studies, and it has to do with either financial difficulties, 'being needed at home', or the fact that it is too difficult to leave home.

→ Children are enthusiastic about the PSS-components in the life-skills classes; the general notion is that it helps to create a safe environment in which sharing is motivated.

I DON'T THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE ANYMORE

Movement Social's centre is not only located at a bustling road. There is clearly a vibrant social life at play in the hallways of the school. In the centre, we sit in a meeting room for at least 30 people on the first floor. Sitting on one end of the table we invite the students to do the same. In contrary to most students, Dahab walks into the room with an open and curious attitude and sits down in front of us. She starts of in English, explaining that she likes to speak English and that she speaks it "a little bit". It becomes clear quite quickly that she is almost fluent in English, and that our translator can take a backseat in the conversation. Dahab explains that while she is born is Aleppo, she already has been in Beirut for more than 6 years. In comparison to other children, Dahab has been able to receive relatively more education. She has already been part of the BLN classes for about eight months. Until about a year ago, she and her siblings went to a private school, which was funded through an NGO. As the funding came to an end last year, they were no longer able to go to school. She sighs while explaining that last year she was not able to enjoy any form of education. While she and her siblings tried – and still try – to apply for formal education, they have been unsuccessful so far. As Dahab explains "we really tried, with many different schools, but there is always an excuse: not enough money or time, no place, or it is just because we are Syrians". Upon asking how she feels about this, she clearly gets frustrated and says: "I just don't understand. It is a basic human right to go to school. Why don't they accept us?".

She goes on to explain that she does really like it at Mouvement Social, but she and her siblings will try to keep applying for other schools, with the hope that at some point it will work. When asking what she likes about the education she receives here, Dahab pauses for some time before saying that she feels that being here has changed her a lot. Especially the life-skills classes. "I used to be really shy and did not really know how to speak up. But now, through activities as role-playing, I have learned that it is important to do so". At the same time, Dahab says she has come to know herself better, and she is now able to formulate her dreams for later. She really hopes to become a
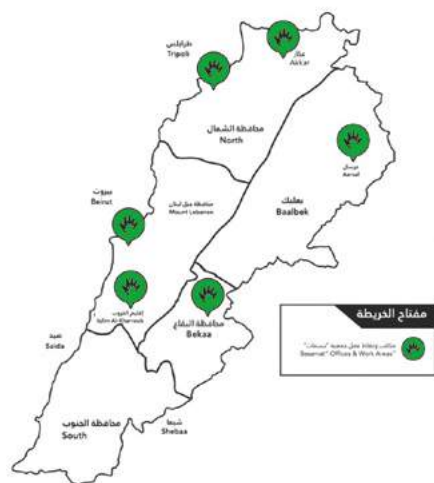
successful businesswoman in the fashion industry. But, on the question in what way she sees the future, Dahab promptly answers "I honestly don't think that much about the future anymore. Before the war I did, but now I just think about today and not even about tomorrow".

"I JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND. IT IS A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT TO GO TO SCHOOL. WHY DON'T THEY ACCEPT US?"

URDA in Arsal and the Bekaa Valley

INTRODUCTION

URDA – Union of Relief and Development Associations – is an international NGO, working in Lebanon and based both there and in The Netherlands. URDA is the only organization in this research that does not receive funding from the Dutch government, but it is incorporated in the research because it presents the same services as the NGOs that do receive funding from the MFA and they aim at deepening their relationship with the Dutch government. The organization works in the fields of shelter, relief, healthcare, education, protection, development and sponsorship (URDA 2020). In the education sector, they specifically focus on establishing schools (mainly in Syrian refugee camps), sponsoring students through scholarships, providing material assistance and transportation. In the protection sector, URDA provides child protection in the camps and their own offices, conducted by a specialized psychosocial support team called 'Bassamat'. URDA manages camps and shelters throughout Lebanon, and they work in several areas with the Bassamat-team. For this research, the centres in Arsal (Baalbek district) and the Bekaa Valley were visited, close to the Syrian border. The PSS URDA provides is developed by a team of psychologists, and

Locations throughout Lebanon where URDA provides PSS

it is included in (A)BLN courses. The education provided by URDA is not recognized by the Lebanese government and hence is informal education. The children can however get into public schools after obtaining their diploma, thus this is an opportunity for them to get back to the formal education system.

For each PSS-session, there are about 20 children in one group, mostly from the same camp in the area. There are 150 children in total per 3-month cycle. Each cycle then again takes 3 months and aims to integrate the more difficult cases with lighter cases, which creates the opportunity to integrate. The session is therefore not referred to as 'PSS' to the children and their parents, but as a 'safe space to grow'. Within each centre, transportation is provided by URDA so all children can partake. URDA takes low and medium cases in the PSS-program and refers high risk cases to case management services (where PSS is part of the case management).

> **Low and medium risk** cases include children that have experienced trauma, but do not currently experience traumatic events. This would for example mean a child who is isolated, and as a result has a change in academic performance or at home (after which a mother might ask URDA for help). These children first go through PSS, after which they are assessed, and possibly go through another cycle.
> **High risk** cases include children that experience trauma at this moment, for example physical abuse or rape; or if a child reports neglect by their parents. These cases are referred to case management services.

A pre- and post-PSS test is done, to see what has changed in the children. These tests are done for both the caregivers and the children themselves. Sometimes a child needs more than one cycle, they can stay as many cycles as needed. If it turns out that PSS does not work or have the expected effect, the children go to focused PSS sessions. In these sessions, there is a maximum of 10 children instead of the normal 20.

Case study 6: Arsal

Context
At the Arsal-site, no children were interviewed, as mentioned before due to time restrictions. The results below are based on 20 filled-out questionnaires.

All the children that partook in the research in Arsal are originally from Syria, coming predominantly from Al-Qusayr, a town relatively close by Arsal, in between Homs and the Lebanese border. 90% of these children have been living in a camp in Arsal or surroundings for longer than 4 years. Moreover, more than half of the children stated that they 'feel good but miss home', forming the biggest group with this sentiment out of all the case studies. Another unique aspect of the children's feelings at this location is that 50% of them mentioned to not feel safe so much at home and in their community – more than at any of the other visited sites. This can stem from the fact that these children live in a refugee camp, whereas at other locations, the interviewed children predominantly live in houses and more sheltered spaces.

Person
Another remarkable conclusion in the Arsal-case study, is the fact that 55% of the children say they are 'not so much' happy in general. Moreover, 30% says they are 'not at all' happy, which is the lowest ranking to give. These combined is the lowest score of happiness from all questionnaires in this research.

Educational interventions
The children that filled out the questionnaire are born between 2004 and 2013, and their school levels vary from 1st to 8th grade. The level of education and their age seem to be in line with each other, although most of the children are a couple of years behind of the class they should be in, due to the war in Syria. 30% of the children express financial difficulties as their biggest issue of getting to school. Nevertheless, most kids don't have issues attending class. 45% of them like to go to class very much, but only half say they will actually finish school. 40% of the kids moreover feel 'neutral' about safety at school, whereas in most other case studies, the predominant feeling is 'very much' safe.

A little more than half of the 20 children that filled-out the surveys receive PSS and they value this as 'not so much' and 'neutral'. This also opposes other case studies, where PSS is valued from 'neutral' to 'very much'. 40% of the children furthermore don't feel like they can share their feelings in class, which is also lower than the average. Again, seeing that this group of kids has been in a refugee camp for many years – in most cases even the majority of their lives – the trend of not feeling optimistic about their surroundings might be based on the environment they live in. This is also shown in the answer to the question if the children's dreams changed the past years; 35% of the kids answered 'yes, because of the events happening around me'.

General conclusions URDA Arsal

→ More than half of the children stated that they 'feel good but miss home', forming the biggest group with this sentiment out of all the case studies.

→ 50% of the children mentioned to not feel safe so much at home and in their community – more than at any of the other visited sites. This can stem from the fact that they live in a refugee camp, whereas at other locations the interviewed children predominantly live in houses and more sheltered spaces.

→ 55% of the children say they are 'not so much' happy in general. Moreover, 30% says they are 'not at all' happy, which is the lowest ranking to give. These combined is the lowest score of happiness from all questionnaires in this research.

→ 40% of the kids feel 'neutral' about safety at school, whereas in most other case studies, the predominant feeling is 'very much' safe.

→ A little more than half of children value PSS-classes as 'not so much' and 'neutral'. This opposes other case studies, where PSS is valued from 'neutral' to 'very much'.

→ 35% of the kids answered 'yes, because of the events happening around me', when asked if their future dreams changed recently. This is the highest score in all the case studies.

Case study 7: Bekaa Valley

Context

In URDA's Bekaa Valley site, 3 children were interviewed and 20 questionnaires were filled in. 16 of the 20 children come from Syria and 4 from Lebanon, and they mostly live with their families in either a refugee camp or an apartment nearby the URDA-office. One third of the children has been there around 2 years and another third has been there for more than 4 years. The children that filled in the questionnaire are born between 2006 and 2012, and the interviewed children are between 6 and 9 years of age. This means that the research population in this case study is relatively younger than in the other cases, which means that the reasoning of the children is at another level. This made for interesting insights.

Half of the children say they are happy living where they live, and more than in any other study, they feel 'neutral' when asked if they feel safe where they live (80%). Many of the children moved around a couple of times before they got to their current place of residence. Sami (9), one of the interviewed kids, is originally from Aleppo and he also moved around a lot. He doesn't like being in the camp too much and he says in Lebanon "the kids annoy him". He says there is a lot of physical fighting, and some of the kids treat him differently and talk behind his back. Even though almost all of the children spoken to are originally from Syria, 90% say they didn't experience any violence.

Person

From the survey it becomes clear that 85% of the children are 'neutral' when it comes to their happiness. The three interviewed children did however indicate that they're happy with their lives; they live in a good place, like the URDA-classes and (if they are enrolled) like going to school. They have friends and this is one of the most important things to them.

Educational interventions

The majority of the children is in either first, second or third grade in school. Half of the surveyed children have difficulties with going to school, ranging from 'it's too dangerous to leave the house' to 'being needed at home'. There is an URDA bus that goes from Turyani

refugee camp that the kids can take to come to the centre, so financial difficulties with getting to the centre are less common in this case study. Two of the interviewed children also go to a formal school in the area, next to participating in the PSS-sessions at the URDA-facility. All the interviewed children stated that they like school very much, and 70% of the surveyed children do as well. Moreover, 70% of them say they want to finish school.

More than half of the surveyed children feel safe at school. All of them are in URDA's PSS-program and 55% of them value its importance as 'very much'. 40% of the children say they share their feelings in class 'very much'. Walid (9) says he "really likes it here", especially because it gives him the opportunity to "learn everything". Most of the children (80%) still want to do the same things in the future as before they came to the centre, ranging from wanting to be a cook to a mechanic.

> **General conclusions URDA Bekaa Valley**
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> → Half of the children say they are happy living where they live, and more than in any other study, they feel 'neutral' when asked if they feel safe where they live (80%).
> → 85% of the children are 'neutral' when it comes to their happiness. This is the highest neutral score out of all the case studies.
> → 70% of the children say they want to finish school, which is amongst the highest scores in all the case studies.

THE MAN IN BLACK

With the reddish tips of his brown hair and his bright eyes, Sami does not look like a 'typical' Syrian kid. Freckles are dotted on his nose and cheeks. When he walks into the room he laughs shyly, showing a small gap between his front teeth. He sits down on a black chair that is too big for him, next to Alaa Kaddoura, URDA's Child Protection Program Manager. She offers him a stroopwafel (Dutch caramel cookie) and he takes it immediately. But he does not eat it, he just holds the cookie in his hand. Looking tentatively at the interviewers, he seems to be deciphering what they want from him. Are they friends? Are they up to any good? His bright eyes beam with these unanswered questions, while he silently awaits the researchers' next move.

Sami tells us about how he's living in Turyani, a refugee camp a couple of minutes away from the URDA office. Before moving there, him, his two sisters, four brothers and his parents lived in a house in central Bekaa. But originally, he is from Aleppo, Syria. And he is Kurdish. His family fled from the war and when talking about his home, Sami appearance changes. He looks less carefree. Clouds form in his eyes, as if he withdraws from the present. The cookie is still in his hand. We ask him if he likes living in Turyani. He does like it there, he says, but does not love it. The Lebanese kids annoy him. They try to pick fights with him and he does not like that. He feels like they talk about him behind his back, but he can't tell us what they say exactly. He is sure it is nothing good, though. Luckily, he has three good friends, with whom he plays until very late at night.
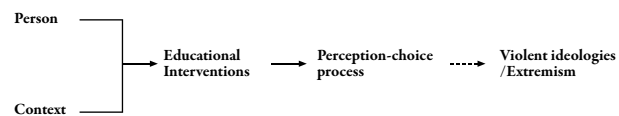
Sami is quiet for a while when asked what his dreams are. Then, he uses his hands to mimic someone strangling him. He says that at night, he dreams that "someone comes to kill him". It's someone from the camp, always the same man. The man is real, but Sami says has never spoken to the man. He is afraid of how the man looks, all dressed in black. Because back home in Aleppo, he was really afraid of men in black and anything would trigger fear. He told his father about this fear and the man in black, and he told him to not be afraid. When the interview is over, all the other children in the URDA office are gone. Sami missed his bus, so we drop him off at the Turyani camp. He rides in the front seat of the car, too short to get a good view out of the front window. When he walks to the camp gates, he looks back and waves, again shyly smiling. The cookie is still in his hand.

SAMI IS QUIET FOR A WHILE WHEN ASKED WHAT HIS DREAMS ARE. THEN, HE USES HIS HANDS TO MIMIC SOMEONE STRANGLING HIM. HE SAYS THAT AT NIGHT, HE DREAMS THAT "SOMEONE COMES TO KILL HIM".

Analysis

In this part of the report, the empirical data obtained in the field will be analysed in relation to the theory. The analysis is done using the adapted situational action model, and is divided into two main parts. It first focuses on the context in relation to the educational interventions, followed by a presentation of the data obtained of the person in relation to the educational interventions, as depicted below.

Analytical framework inspired by Wikström's SAT

Person ┐
        ├──► Educational ──► Perception-choice ┈┈► Violent ideologies
Context ┘   Interventions   process   /Extremism

Divided over the two main parts, four focal points are provided that indicate the influence of the educational interventions on the perception-choice process from the children spoken to, in relation to their context. While each child is first analysed separately using the situational model, the data has later been analysed per case study as presented in the empirical part of this report.

CONTEXT IN RELATION TO EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTIONS

1. The importance of context in relation to education

Per case study the 'context' proofs to be relatively similar among the children, but there are large differences in context between the case studies. When observing the different case studies, it becomes clear that e.g. children in Beirut deal with a complex, tense situation due to the high levels of sectarianism in the city. The story of Brahim, who presents himself as a Christian to disguise his Muslim identity, is a clear indication of the complex social situation that children need to navigate daily. Since many of the children work late shifts and have to walk home alone late at night, this furthermore affects them.

This directly influences their feelings of safety and happiness, as shown in the research at Mouvement Social, with 40% of the children indicating they are 'happy' about their living circumstances and only 20% feeling safe. Furthermore, a refugee camp-setting as in Arsal, is a place where half of the children indicated to not feel so safe at home and in their community, which stems from their 'makeshift' living situation and the tough living conditions.

Overall, this directs us to really consider the children's living circumstances when researching and implementing educational interventions. While educational interventions provided by AVT-L in a public school in Tripoli offer the possibility of directly discussing topics as religious extremism, radicalization, or simply religious differences, this is too sensitive to discuss openly in the sectarian context of Beirut where Mouvement Social operates. The influence of the educational interventions will hence have different (and perhaps undesirable) effects when not giving enough thought to the context in which the interventions are provided. In a broader contextual notion, various refugee children have indicated to be 'happy' where they live as it provides a sense of security – not having to wake up at night being scared for airplanes or bombings back in Syria. Their current context provides an opportunity to feel at ease where they are, which opens them up to receiving educational interventions.

2. The contextual obstacles to education

There are however a number of context-related concerns that cross the 'borders' of our case studies, the clearest one being the 'obstacles to attending education', which will be discussed here. Earlier research, as conducted by Hamadeh (2018) or Human Rights Watch (2016) for example, indicated that there are various reasons that children were unable to receive educational interventions. The fact that more than half of the Syrian students are unable to attend formal or non-formal education (Hamadeh 2018, 8; MCSL 2019, 4), moreover indicates the urgency of this issue.

Our data indicates that the socio-economic context in Lebanon is one where it is increasingly difficult for Syrian adults to obtain the right working documents. There has moreover been a rapid increase of identity-checks at the workplace, which forces parents to stop working illegally. As a result, children – sometimes as young as 8 years-old – are forced to start working. Across the country, in the various case studies with refugee children, there is the understanding that while working permits from adults will be checked, children can often escape this. The possibility to offer ABLN classes offered the opportunity for various of the participants to combine work with school; these Adapted BLN courses are established mainly because for this purpose, showcasing the urgency of the matter. At the same time however, this also means that these children often work 5-7 days a week, only taking a break from work to go to school. While none of the children specifically indicated to be 'tired' from their busy schedule, all of them indicated to prefer to just go to school. This shows that while the children are able to receive the educational interventions, the classes have to be built around their working schedules, which come first in importance for their livelihood.

Another obstacle that has been presented in the majority of the case studies (with the exception of AVT-L in Tripoli) is financial difficulties at home. At LOST, in the Bekaa Valley, all of the children in the surveys indicated to experience, or to have experienced, financial issues when going to school. Related to this is the fact that some children explained to be 'needed at home', i.e. in the form of providing childcare, or to help with other tasks. Furthermore, on a higher level is the often-heard phrase that 'the bus stopped coming'. The data shows that in all the (A)BLN centres we have visited, children were forced out of education at some points in their educational careers, after the subsidies for organisations providing the educational interventions have dried out or got differently allocated. The story of Mohammed (11), who remained out of school for 5 years, is a sad indication of the importance to assure not only a

continuity in the provision of the educational interventions, but it also shows the lack of communication to the family, who were kept in the dark about why the 'bus stopped coming'. It is hence of high significance to tackle these contextual obstacles, in order to assure that the planned educational interventions have the desired effects.

PERSON IN RELATION TO THE EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTIONS

3. Education provides a sense of purpose
In all case studies it has become apparent that education, mostly in the form of (A)BLN, is something longed for by (mainly) the Syrian refugee children. As Sirin and Rogers-Sirin (2015) mention, children who are not formally educated are more likely to feel marginalized and hopeless, which can make them vulnerable targets for radicalization. This also shows in the percentages of students who like school 'very much'. In the two public schools we've visited, where the vast majority of the students originates from Lebanon, only a minority of the students indicated to like going to school. In contrary to this, at least half of all the students attending the (A)BLN centres very much like going to school. In the interviews it became clear that students moreover feel that school offers a sense of structure and security. And, especially for children who live in a camp, our study shows it forms a daily activity and can give a sense of purpose. The importance of this needs to be underlined.

In line with this is the notion that school offers the possibility for a better future. While some children say they would want to continue working in the job they are working now (i.e. as a shoemaker) school is still regarded as an important part of their lives, at least to learn how to read and write. Keeping in mind that we are mostly referring to young children, their perspectives for the future change. This also becomes clear when talking about dreams and future career objectives. When talking to the children with a refugee background, it immediately becomes clear that the events around them have shaped their dreams for the future. For various children their future

'dreams' are strongly related to their war-related past. Where the survey indicates that the majority of the children either want to become a teacher, or a doctor, the interviews show that the wish to become a doctor is often related to the idea of helping victims of the war. As the surveys indicate, dreams often changed over the past year, and these changes are in about 25% of the cases even directly linked to the classes received at school. Mahmoud (13), working at a pickle company) for example explains he realized he really wanted to become a math teacher, as this is his favourite subject at school. The educational interventions in the form of (A)BLN hence shape new opportunities, as the received education provides opportunities to be able to study the necessary skills for employment, and moreover explore the possibilities 'out there in the world'.

4. PSS is crucial in coping with a war-past
It has furthermore become clear that offering education alone is not enough. The majority of the researched children indicated to benefit greatly from the PSS-components present in the (A)BLN classes. As mentioned in the theory, there is a growing understanding that the appropriate psychosocial support (PSS) should be provided, especially for refugee children, in order to overcome possible (i.e. war-related) trauma and build resilience to triggers to violent ideologies (EC 2019; UNESCO 2017). Moreover, inadequate responsiveness will in this view increase the risk of mental health problems in war-affected children (Betancourt et al 2013). As the 'Hobfoll principles' (Hobfoll et al. 2007) indicate, there is a necessity within trauma reducing interventions to promote "(1) a sense of safety, (2) calming, (3) a sense of self-and-community efficacy, (4) connectedness, and (5) hope".

In the surveys it becomes clear that while at every educational centre (both public schools and the (A)BLN centres) there are children who receive PSS classes, not every child receives life-skill classes, of which PSS is a part. Life-skill classes are a relatively new addition to the basic BLN classes, which exist of English, Arabic and Math. The curriculum for life-skills classes are designed by for example War

Child or UNICEF, which are implemented by their partners LOST and Mouvement Social. As became clear while visiting the different centres, not all classes are receiving the life-skill classes as in some cases the classes are still in a 'starting phase'. The survey furthermore shows that from the students who receive(d) PSS, only 25% of the students who received PSS classes at one case study (URDA - Arsal) did not value the classes. The rest of the students were either neutral or very positive about the classes.

The interviews offered us the opportunity to get insight into the effect of PSS classes on the children. In these interviews it became clear that the interventions had a positive impact on most of the children. In general PSS classes seem to not only offer a '(1) sense of safety', but also install '(5) hope' for a better future. Dahab (14) for example explained that PSS classes helped to ease her mind, make her feel safe, and because of that it offered her the opportunity to get to know herself better and gather the confidence to follow her dreams of becoming a businesswoman. At the same time, various children also explain to feel that it is important to share stories and emotions, to learn from each other. In line with this, Maryam (17) explains that after receiving the PSS classes, she is more aware of the fact that she wants to help people to deal with their feelings. The notion of wanting to help others after receiving the classes was also shared by various other interviewees. This indicates an increased form '(4) connectedness', and '(3) self-and-community efficacy'. Lastly, the majority of the children explained us to feel more at ease, in other words, that the PSS classes helped to '(2) calm' their minds. Because, as Dahab (14) says "when your mind is relaxed, that means you are safe". It thus becomes clear that the PSS classes indicate to promote the 5 Hobfoll principles, which then again provides a better environment to absorb new information at school, and maybe in some cases offer the opportunity to slowly start thinking about the future. Here the combination of education and PSS classes becomes clear, as both appear to be crucial work towards new opportunities, and to envision a (better) future.

Conclusion & recommendations

Over the course of this research, the initial scope of the study broadened due to the discoveries made in the field. Where we set out to investigate a (more or less) direct link between Dutch subsidised education and the aim of Preventing of Violent Extremism in Lebanon, it soon became clear it was harder than expected to follow the money trail of Dutch subsidies. The main reason for this is that the Dutch government prefers to use unearmarked funding methods, for example to UNICEF Lebanon. This choice makes it possible for i.e. UNICEF to increase their efficiency in (among others) supporting educational interventions in the country (UNICEF 2018). It however complicated the search in finding organisations that (in)directly are funded through Dutch government subsidies allocated for educational interventions and safety/protection. On top of that, the Dutch ODA that focusses on creating stability in the MENA-region is divided in two thematic fragments: educational interventions and safety/protection. Out of the €200 million allocated to Lebanon between 2019-2022, about 3/5 goes to these fragments, which is more than half of the allocated budget. Through the help from the Dutch Embassy in Beirut and our wider network, we managed to select five organisations that opened their doors for us: AVT-L, War Child, URDA, and as partner of UNICEF: Mouvement Social and LOST.

Another interesting discovery early on in our research, was that the majority of the contacted organisations initially did not see the link between their work and the wider preventing violent extremism debate. The intersection of the educational interventions and safety/protection budget allocation however resulted in the strong focus of PSS and life-skill classes within the educational interventions present throughout the country. It moreover became clear that the majority of the students attending the subsidised educational interventions are Syrian refugees, of whom the majority received PSS or life-skills classes (next to English, Arabic and math), being taught at the (A)BLN, formal and non-formal education centres we visited throughout Lebanon. The design of the PSS and life-skills classes is predominantly in the hands of international organisations, as War Child or UNICEF, as is the evaluation of the outcomes and possible collaboration/knowledge sharing with other players in this field.

During our time in the field, we were able to conduct in-depth interviews with over 20 children at seven different educational centres spread throughout the country. On top of that, we were happy to gather anonymous surveys, filled in by over 150 children from the different centres. The gathered data enabled us to answer the main question: *what are the effects of educational interventions subsidized by the Dutch government on school-going children in Lebanon, in relation to preventing violent extremism?* In the interviews it soon became clear that 'going to school' had a major effect specifically on the majority of the refugee children, as school offered a sense of purpose while often coping with war-related trauma. Next to that, the surveys and the interviews indicated that the PSS/life-skills programmes had an overall positive impact on both refugee and non-refugee children; an often-heard impact is that the students explained to know better how to deal with their emotions, or how to help others deal with their emotions/feelings. The professionals spoken to at the (A)BLN centres explained us that in most cases clear changes were visible in the children. At URDA in Arsal, a system was used where children could indicate if they wanted to start the day with a hug, a high-five, a handshake or a dance. According to the professionals working at the centre, the behaviour of the majority of the children changed visibly from being distant and 'closed off' to over time becoming more open and receptive of positive attention, i.e. by wanting a hug, instead of handshake. What moreover became clear, within the PSS interventions for non-refugee children at public schools, is the possibility to directly discuss the presence of extremism, terrorism and related traumas. In the (A)BLN centres for refugees on the other hand, the mentioning of extremism, or any interventions in relation to PVE, seems to be too sensitive and complex to discuss directly. The focus of these PSS interventions remained broader and focused more on dealing with emotions and feelings tainted by a war past. Next to

the controversy concerning PVE, religion also appeared to be a sensitive topic. Already during the sharing of the surveys before entering the field, we were recommended by various professionals working at the respective centres, to adjust our surveys to limit or delete questions on the importance of religion. This was either because it is deemed too sensitive to discuss, or because questions on religions could be received as confusing by the children. At Mouvement Social in Beirut, we were requested to not refer to religion at all, due to the non-sectarian nature of the centre.

While overall, we have managed to use triangulation (interviews, surveys and documentary/policy analysis) guaranteeing the validity of our data, we also have to acknowledge a possible bias in our data due to the limited time we could spend in the field. This mostly became clear during the first interview we conducted at Mouvement Social in Beirut, where it afterwards became clear that Farouk, the interviewee, did not trust us enough to tell the truth: that he has a Muslim background and was not Christian, as he told us to be. As a result, the centre coordinator joined in for the other interviews, aiming to diminish that particular bias. In the other centres, we have aimed at diminishing that bias by using 'probing' as an interview technique, where we either remained silent long enough, we portrayed naivety, or we echoed a student's answer (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011). Upon doing so, we often were able to 'dig a little deeper', and for example discover that certain students had a different dream for the future (i.e. becoming an artist), than at first explained (i.e. wanting to become a doctor to help victims of the war). However, upon conducting a follow-up research, it is important to remain longer in the field to build rapport and diminish this form of bias.

Largely it can be argued that the educational interventions, such as PSS, have a positive effect on both refugee and non-refugee children. Also, in relation to PVE, it appears that while there are clear links between the existing wider PVE debate and the interventions, on the ground it is not understood as such. This seems to be due to a lack of

a wider accepted PVE definition and the unwillingness to talk about this subject with the children. As we have defined PVE, these are the actions taken to prevent violent acts that occur as part of, and are support by, violent ideologies. In line with the Hobfoll principles (Hobfoll et al. 2007), psychosocial support has the capacity to promotes "(1) a sense of safety, (2) calming, (3) a sense of self-and-community efficacy, (4) connectedness, and (5) hope". Here we would like to argue that the these Hobfoll principles can be understood as soft power that can be aimed at diminishing the 'push and pull' factors of violent extremism. Moreover, as stated by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution 70/109 (UN 2015, 3/4), we ought to understand "vital importance of education, including human rights education, as the most effective means of promoting tolerance, in preventing the spread of extremism by instilling respect for life and promoting the practice of vital importance of education (…)". It is clear that the educational interventions provide a sense of purpose and safety, whereby the students are taught (both refugee and non-refugee) how to deal with emotions, cope with war-related trauma, and it promotes a sense of tolerance, which ultimately can diminish the push and pull factors of violent extremism.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

Importance of PSS as part of educational interventions

The empirical data shows that both psychosocial support, i.e. as part of life-skills classes, and more traditional forms of education (as language and math-skills) are important. More specifically, the combination of PSS and education provides the opportunity for students to both obtain a sense of purpose, envision a future, and to learn how to cope with (war-related) emotions or to generate calmness and sense of safety.

The context in which the educational interventions are provided are of huge importance

As has become clear in the analysis, the context in which the educational interventions are provided is of crucial importance to consider. While in some contextual settings it is possible to discuss violent extremism, in others this is not. Same goes for the topic of religion.

Lack of a widely supported PVE-definition

By trying to deduct how preventing violent extremism is operationalised in practice in Lebanon, it has become apparent that there is disunity when discussing the term PVE and the related projects. As the theory presents, there is not one accepted definition of PVE, which (therefore) has not been implemented into policy as such. This leads to different understandings of the term and varying operationalisations in the work field; as one Dutch ministry employee put it, we "might as well call it Bob", since everyone knows that PVE is such a diffuse term.

Moreover, the literal use of 'PVE' is often not permitted by the various different organizations. Additionally, discussing religion with students has been proven difficult, since many NGOs did not allow us to bring this up. The only organization that let us discuss religion, PVE, extremism and even terrorism was AVT-L. Interesting enough, this is also an organization that mostly provides classes in public schools, and therefore (at least in our research) do not include refugee children as their focal point. This moreover means that the NGOs that we visited that do provide educational interventions for (Syrian) refugee children, do not (openly) discuss these heavy topics, even though making these subjects less taboo might bring about useful insights in how the children relate to it.

There are differences in the understanding what the PSS-curriculum should entail

During our research it became clear that there similarly are varying definitions of what a PSS-class should and does encompass. Different NGOs furthermore use different PSS-curricula, whereby there are for example alterations between War Child's and UNICEF's design. This does not immediately lead to less useful class-materials, but it might be fruitful to start an inter-organisational discussion on 'what works' to create more synchronised material. Sharing knowledge in this perspective becomes even more profitable when considering all the school-switches many of the children have made and probably will make in the future. A connected and coherent PSS-curriculum could proof to be beneficial in bridging some of the gaps made by being out of class for the students.

The fragile use of PVE within educational interventions

As mentioned before, there is a lack of clear definitions in the fields of PVE and PSS, and moreover, there is an unwillingness of NGOs to discuss PVE-related topics in the PSS and life-skills classes. With this in mind, Steven Hawkins (Executive Director of Amnesty International USA) coined that repressive governments "take advantage of 'CVE-mania'" and "use international funding to violate human rights in the absence of appropriate safe-guards" (Hayes & Qureshi 2016). Not daring to raise awareness on this subject might thus lead to other parties taking advantage of this gap in knowledge. This is especially important when considering the possibility that PSS-classes can be used as a part in the broader peace and conflict resolution process, whereby potential risks in children's ideologies and way of thinking can be intercepted before they come to fruition in a violent manner.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Intersectoral

→ Professionals sector wide should aim for better communication between different actors (on different levels) on the ground and connect this to policy;

→ Professionals should aim for a PVE-definition clarification. Discussing the use of PVE notions in projects should be the norm;

→ Both the Dutch government and international NGO's should continue to support research to bridge the current gaps on PVE, education and PSS-related policies.

Experts

→ Should aim for a more a widely accepted PVE-definition, which can be reached through conducting research on both a local and global level, and accordingly collaboratively establish and use this definition in the field and in policymaking;

→ Should acknowledge it is important to conduct further research into the needs of the (refugee) children and learn from their experiences with PSS/MHPSS-classes, to where needed enhance these courses.

(I)NGO's

→ Should continue to provide PSS-classes, as part of educational interventions;

→ Should focus on creating more synchronized PSS-curricula among the different NGO's in Lebanon, to better align them;

→ Should continue to investigate/incorporate the importance of the local context;

→ Should continue to monitor problems regarding i.e. financial issues or other possible obstacles to education to their donors, to make sure 'the bus' does not stop coming. The ending of funding periods can be better aligned and communicated sector wide.

Local NGO's/partner organisations

→ Being closest to the beneficiaries (the children), they should continue to communicate concerns from discoveries on the ground;

→ Should set and maintain a certain standard of professionalism regarding working with (often war-traumatized) children;

→ Should continue to voice problems regarding i.e. financial issues or other possible obstacles to education to their donors, to make sure 'the bus' does not stop coming.

The Dutch government

→ Should keep a focus on the obstructions to education, and continue the discussion with international and local NGOs to limit these obstructions;

→ Should support research and programs to find the best opportunities to overcome issues with illegal child labour;

→ Should keep in contact with NGO's and local experts to provide policy that is well connected to the local situation(s);

→ Should urge NGO's to keep researching and incorporating the local context in which the interventions are provided.

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