

SITUATION ANALYSIS

Activities in the social stability sector continued to be implemented at a fast pace in February, with social stability partners now present in 133 of the 242 targeted vulnerable cadastres, while more and more community members are getting involved in activities of the sector. 20 new youth initiatives were established (4 new sports club, 8 initiatives promoting active citizenship, and 8 joint recreational and educational activities), gathering 407 new youth participants from different communities (254 Lebanese, 133 Syrians and 20 Palestinians). Conflict mitigation committees and dialogue forums set up by partners at community level also grew both in size and in numbers. 15 new committees were established (nearly equaling the overall achievement of 16 in 2014) engaging 761 community members who work to defuse tensions at the local level.

Relatively few new municipal or community support projects were completed so far this year (15 in total), which is partly explained by the severe weather conditions which slowed work down. 40 such projects are nevertheless underway and will be completed in the next few weeks.

The executive summary of the vulnerability assessment of Syrians registered as refugees with UNHCR highlighted specific concerns related to social stability and a degradation in community interactions, with insecurity and harassment by neighbors showing 'a remarkable increase compared to 2013'. The study concludes that 'tension with host communities had increased making security situation an issue of concern'.

Yet, it is also important to note that more recent assessments highlight a potential improvement in inter-community relations. Indeed, perception surveys conducted in the North and in the Bekaa for USAID are showing that after months of degradations, most respondents now indicate that relations between Syrians and Lebanese in their community was neutral (45%) or positive (40%). This improvement can be explained both by the decrease in the spike of tensions which followed the August clashes in Aarsal but also by more 'seasonal' variation, with tensions related to water (the main source of tensions in the past months) dropping significantly in the winter.

