

## NEWSLETTER PLATFORM

### Newsletter #3 – Third quarter 2020

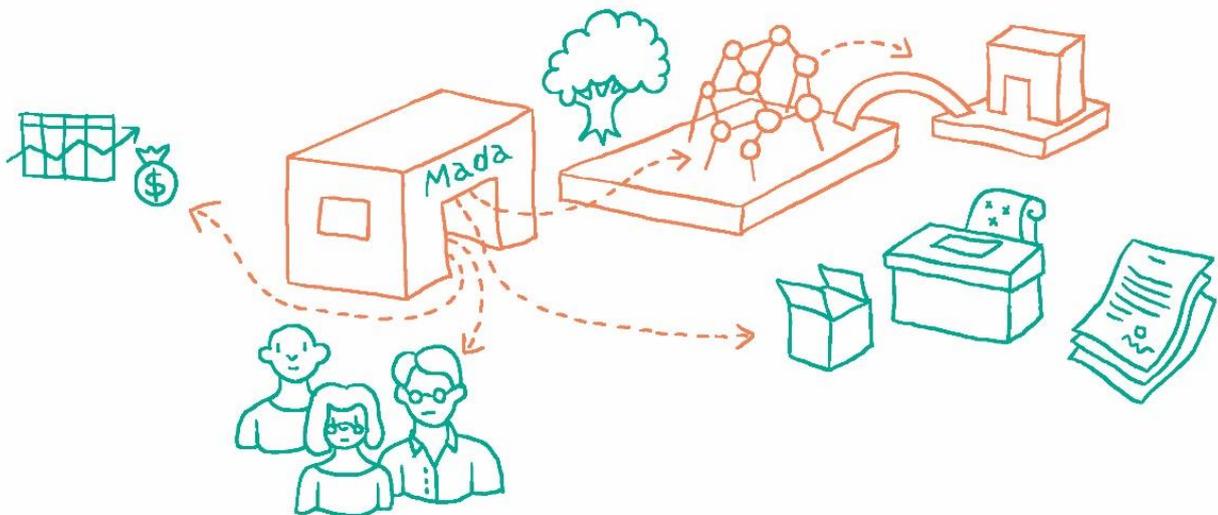
The Platform is a space that offers flexible support for civil initiatives to help them grow and reach their full potential. Active since 2005, it has supported more than 10 organizations or groups, such as artistic communities, municipalities, environmental associations, early-stage social businesses... Since the end of 2019, the Platform has grown in capacity which has enabled it to open up to new members and offer closer support.

During Summer 2020, the Lebanese population was confronted to multiple challenges, including the worsening of the economic crisis and the rise of Covid cases. The blast that shattered Beirut on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 2020 generated a massive need for humanitarian assistance and highlighted longer-term needs, that already existed before the explosion but which were not being addressed. As a consequence, the role of the Platform is set to evolve, as we are now confronted with a double challenge: on the one hand, help the current members overcome the constraints induced by the crises and, on the other hand, include new initiatives that were created in response to the multiple crises and that need support to structure their activities.

The purpose of this newsletter is to inform Mada's network on:

- What did the Platform achieve between July and September 2020?
- How is the Platform participating to the response to the Beirut blast?
- What are our future prospects?

If you have any further question or suggestion, please contact us directly ([platform@mada.org.lb](mailto:platform@mada.org.lb)), we will be pleased to hear from you.



## What did the Platform achieve between July and September 2020?

- Develop the marketing strategy and the selling opportunities of **Hikayatouna**, an early stage enterprise of handmade Levantine crafts.



During Q3 2020, the Platform provided direct support on a weekly basis to communicate on Hikayatouna's social media (see their [Instagram](#) and [facebook](#) accounts) and diffuse the catalogue of the 2020 collection, which increased their visibility. We also facilitated contact with different selling points in Beirut and abroad. Two deliveries were made to France and Sweden to organize exhibitions in the fall and a new opportunity opened to export to Dubai for the organization of a Christmas market in solidarity with Lebanese craft workers. These activities contributed to the development of the client base, which is crucial for the sustainability of the workshop. A new challenge is to set affordable prices for the Lebanese client base, while covering production costs which are hyper inflated.

- Support the financial and legal structuration of **Horshna**, a collective initiative that offers childcare services in the nature (currently in the Baabda forest).



*Collective launch meeting for the new school year – September 12 – Baabda Forest.*

With the start of the new school year, Horshna doubled its childcare capacity (there are now 15 children and 5 educators, instead of 7 children and 3 educators last year). It was therefore essential to strengthen the capacity to manage day-to-day affairs. In this respect, a new coordinator was recruited and, with the Platform's support, he closed the accounts for last year and estimated the budget for the new school year. The Platform also helped identify legal options for the registration of the initiative and facilitated contacts with lawyers to ask for their advice. Indeed, after a year of existence, Horshna has gained momentum and is seeking to structure itself furthermore.

- Strengthen the administrative and financial capacities of **Samandal**, an association dedicated to the advancement of comic art in the Arab world.

السَّمَنْدَل  
Samandal

After submitting a proposal drafted with the Platform's methodological support, Samandal received a grant from a solidarity fund for Lebanese artists, managed by the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC) and Culture Ressource. The purpose of this grant is to enable Samandal to compensate its operational and administrative activities and to mitigate the rising cost of paper printing by developing tools for online

publications. The Platform also helped identify the accounting needs of Samandal and drafted Terms of Reference to recruit an accounting consultant.

- Encourage the development of the **Farasheh** project, an experimental initiative in the camp of Shatila revolving around urban planning and environmental issues.



The Farasheh project is led by a young architect and the Children Youth Center, a Palestinian association based in Shatila. The objective is to work on the notion of public space by creating urban furniture in a courtyard of the camp, developing gardening workshops and addressing waste management issues with the children of the center. During Q3 2020, the Platform started supporting the project leader by putting her in contact with resource people capable of providing a technical perspective. In order to enable Farasheh to experiment its ideas and attract funding, the Platform provided methodological support to structure the activities and develop two project proposals.

- Provide administrative support to **Empower**, a Lebanese association aiming to promote social cohesion through education and civic activities. During Q3 2020, the Platform held weekly meetings with Empower's manager in charge of vocational trainings, to build his accounting and financial capacities. Moreover, Empower's staff participated to a workshop organized by Mada on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) issues. This workshop was the first step of a longer process aiming to structure Empower's safeguarding policies.
- Adapt the plan of activities with the team of the **Sénévé** in Homs, a center for children with specific needs. Due to the instable context in Lebanon since October 2019 and to the difficulties in crossing the Syrian border since the beginning of the Covid crisis, the Platform hasn't been able to provide direct support. During Q3 2020, we reviewed the needs and possibilities for action: a workshop will be organized in Homs during fall 2020 with a psychologist who has already worked with the team and is familiar with the needs and dynamics. This workshop will provide space and time for collective expression as well as individual support to the educators.

### How is the Platform participating to the response to the Beirut blast?

The explosion that destroyed the port of Beirut and the surrounding areas on the 4th of August 2020 was a game changer. Confronted with the immensity of the needs, many civil initiatives were formed spontaneously to provide immediate support, such as clearing debris, offering food and replacing doors and windows. Mada contributed to the collective response by supporting food distributions: during the month which followed the explosion, around 53 tons of vegetables and fruits and 7 tons of dry products were distributed to the people affected by the blast through 10 kitchens preparing hot meals, sandwiches and food baskets.

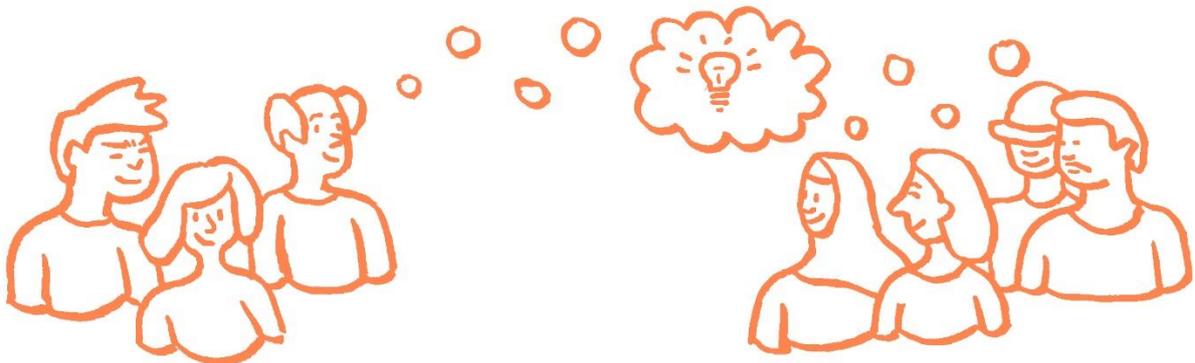
The Platform's contribution was to identify and establish contact with these 10 kitchens. Nearly two months after the explosion, some of these initiatives seek to pursue and formalize their activity.



In particular, the civil initiative Nation Station, based in an old gas station in the heart of Geitawi, serves as a hub for food, medical and material support. Based on a detailed and evolving assessment of the needs, they are essential players in the response to the blast. Led by a core group of 15 community members and supported by many young volunteers and associations, Nation Station is now reflecting on how to sustain itself over the longer term and how to adapt to the evolving needs of the neighborhood. In this respect, the Platform initiated a collaboration to encourage the sustainability of the initiative in the upcoming months.

#### What are our future prospects?

- More transversally speaking, substantive work is underway to build Mada's **safeguarding policies** and to improve **administrative procedures** which will be shared with the Platform members, when applicable.
- A first meeting of Mada's board sub-committee for the Platform was organized in July 2020 which paved the way for a more collaborative way of defining future orientations and partnerships. A second meeting will be organized in the fall to discuss governance issues, new potential partnerships and funding opportunities.
- During Q4 2020, the Platform will open to new members involved in the response to the economic crisis, given that this has become a central issue in Lebanon. Two initiatives seeking to alleviate the consequences of the crisis in a sustainable way have been pre-identified.



#### Contact the Platform:

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