

NEWSLETTER PLATFORM

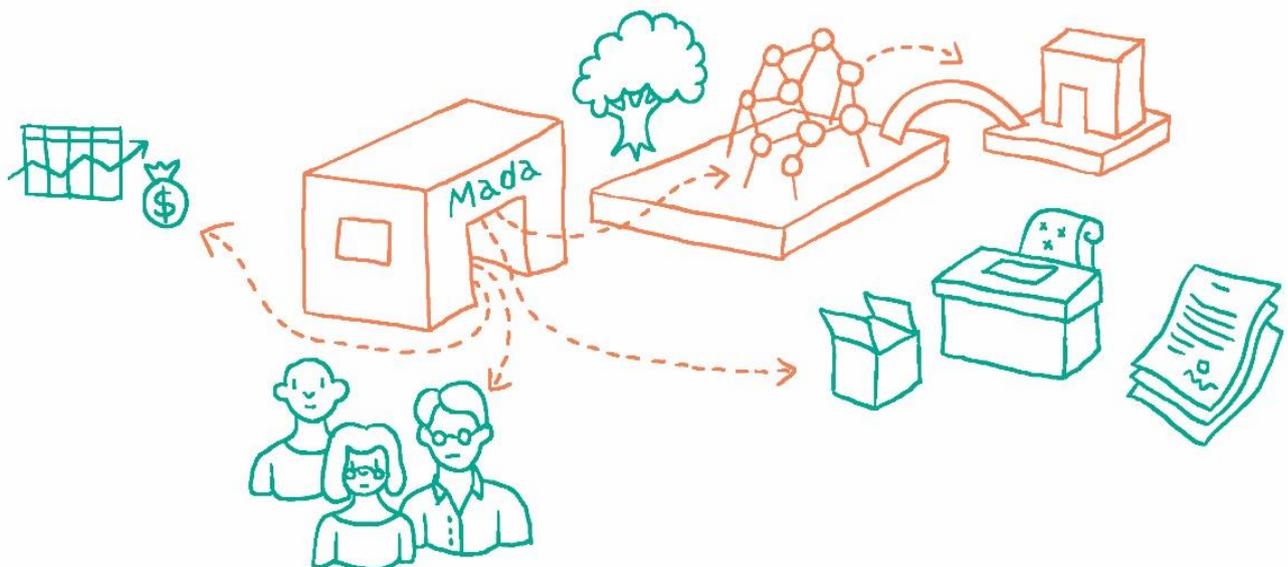
Newsletter #4 – Last quarter 2020

The Platform is a space that offers flexible support for citizens' 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 the fall of 2020, the sanitary, economic and social crises continued to gain ground in Lebanon and the population of Beirut struggled to recover from the explosion of August 4, 2020. The Platform included two new initiatives that were created in response to the multiple crises and that need support to sustain and develop their activities. It also adapted its role in order to help furthermore the current members overcome the constraints induced by the crises. Despite the repetitive lockdowns related to the Corona crisis, many activities were implemented with the members of the Platform as detailed further on.

The purpose of this newsletter is to inform Mada's network on the Platform's achievements between October and December 2020. We also wish to address our best wishes to all of our partners for the new year to come, among which:

- The Platform's current and former members: Dikkeni project, Empower, Farasheh, Hikayatouna, Horshna, Mejwiz, Najda Now, Nation Station, Samandal, Sénévé, Zoukak.
- And our donor, the Catholic International Development Charity in England and Wales (CAFOD), for their continuous support.



What did the Platform achieve between October and December 2020?

○ **Strengthening team cohesion and encouraging the personal development of educators**

With Sénévé, a center for children with specific needs in Homs (Syria), we implemented a 4 days' workshop led by a psychologist. As a result, 30 educators received support to manage stress and emotions and benefitted from individual and group therapy. This activity follows on from several workshops that were organized with the educators in 2017 and 2018. The team is fully dedicated to taking care of the 90 children and teenagers of the center, and they deserve as much support as possible to carry out their mission.



*Relaxation activities with the educators of the center Sénévé during the workshop (November, 2020).

○ **Providing support in terms of accounting**

The Platform identified and supported the recruitment of two external accountants for Samandal association and the grassroots' initiative Nation Station. This allowed both groups to receive regular professional support and to improve the structuration and management of their finances. We also ensured regular follow-up of the account-keeping of the association Empower and the collective Horshna.

Moreover, an accounting software was provided to the Dikeni project, which is the Platform's latest member. This social grocery project, based in the area of Ras el Nabaa (Beirut), started in October 2020 and consists in selling food at a competitive price in return for a monthly membership fee from the customers. Given the difficult circumstances, it is important to support a project fighting price inflation and aiming for a self-sustainable economic model. The accounting software is a necessary tool to manage purchases and accounts efficiently.

○ **Offering marketing and communication services**

The Platform facilitated the organization of three Christmas sales in Beirut, Paris and Dubai for Hikayatouna, an early-stage business of Levantine crafts. As a result, the two women in charge managed to increase their sales and to strengthen their network, in Lebanon and abroad. Moreover, a photo shoot of their latest creations was organized and around 30 posts on social media were produced, which contributed to increase their online visibility and to attract new clients.



On the left, a photo of the sale organized in a coffee place in Ashrafieh (Beirut) in December 2020. On the right, a photo from the photo shoot organized in October 2020 to document their latest creations.

○ **Providing legal support**

Different options were identified to register informal nonprofit entities in the Lebanese law, such as Horshna, a collective outdoor nursery project, and Nation Station, a grassroots' initiative created in response to the Beirut blast. This allowed both groups to be better informed on the pros and cons of different registration options. The Platform also took in charge the registration fees of Nation Station as a civil company, which was formalized by a notary in December 2020. This will enable Nation Station to have an administrative status and to open a bank account, which will facilitate future partnerships and transactions.



Volunteers from Nation Station are stocking vegetables received from an NGO, before distributing them to the community members in Geitawi (Beirut).

○ **Helping with grant management (fundraising and reporting)**

The Platform helped Nation Station develop a proposal in order to sustain and develop the post-blast activities and the community hub. This enabled Nation Station to adopt a strategic vision and to structure their goals and their activities.

Moreover, methodological support was provided to the leader of the Farasheh project to update the concept note and the budget. Individual coaching was also provided to prepare meetings with potential donors. As a result, the project leader clarified the priorities and gained skills in fundraising.



On the left, an illustration of the streets of Shatila, from Lilia Benbelaïd, Farasheh’s project leader. On the right, community members are planting a tree in the courtyard of the Children and Youth Center (CYC), in the frame of the Farasheh project and with the participation of Buzuruna Guzuruna.

- 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 second meeting of Mada’s board sub-committee for the Platform was organized in October 2020 to discuss general orientations, new potential partnerships and funding opportunities.



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