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LOCAL NGOS: ATTENDING TO THE NEEDS OF RURAL YOUTH OR IMPLMENTING READY-MADE PROJECTS?

by
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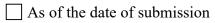Political Studies and Public Administration

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ABSTRACT
OF THE THESIS OF

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Title: <u>Local NGOs: Attending to the Needs of Rural Youth or Implementing Ready-Made Projects?</u>

Rural youth comprise the highest percentages of total youth and a substantial portion of the population in developing countries that rely majorly on the agro-food industry for employment. They are not prioritized by many states' developmental programs in LIDCs due to shortage in resources despite them being an integral part of these countries. Rural youth developmental needs ranging from health, education, capacity building, to employment are neglected by the governments and so, NGOs had to fill these gaps. The research shows that despite NGOs' intentions and efforts in fulfilling the needs of rural youth in developing countries, they fail to address major challenges still faced by youth today such as skill mismatch and securing employment. In Lebanon, the services provided by NGOs are effective most of the time according to the reports, but the long-term success and sustainability are not measured or sometimes even taken into consideration when designing and planning projects. The research targeted rural areas in Lebanon, mainly North Beqaa, Mount Lebanon, Southern and Northern areas in Lebanon. A total of twenty NGOs representatives and ninety-eight youth participated in the study. The findings show that NGOs in Lebanon address many of the needs of rural youth through the various development projects implemented but it is not done comprehensively, effectively, or sustainably. This research is based on qualitative research methodology that aims to give voice to rural youth in Lebanon for them to state their actual needs to have a better living. At the same time, it can serve an eye opener to some NGOs that are planning new development projects for youth in Lebanon where they realize that their work can be more effective if youth's needs are researched properly and centralized in the project design and implementation.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ALMP: Labor Market Policies
CSOs: Civil Society Organizations
EU: European Union
FGD: Focus Group Discussion
ILO: International Labor Organization
LIDCs   Low-Income Developing Countries
MDGs: Millennium Development Goals
M&E: Monitoring and Evaluation
MEAL: Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
MoYS: Ministry of Youth and Sports
NGOs: Non-Governmental organizations
OECD: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
UN: United Nations
UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, the average percentage of youth residing in rural areas is 55% and it goes up to 70% in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (Atchoarena & Gasperini, 2003). The majority of low and middle-income countries rely on agriculture as the major sector that employs youth, accounting for 35% of total employment in Asia and 44% in Africa and a higher portion of rural employment (ILO, 2017; White, 2019). In the Arab region, it employs 22 per cent of the workforce in the Middle East and 29 per cent in North Africa (Chaaban, 2013).

If we look at the governmental agricultural programs and policies in many developing countries that should be heavily relying on agricultural development for food sustainability, we find that they give little attention to the role of rural youth (Bennell, 2007). "Youth" is defined differently based on policy makers, scholars, and states. In Lebanon, the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS) legally defines this category as people of age range between 15 and 25. Others expand this category up to the age of 29 while some define it as those whose ages range between 18-35 (Harb, 2016). Regardless of the definition, youth constitute a substantial portion of the population in developing countries. In most of these countries, poor rural children transition quickly into adulthood as they start working at an early age. Despite that, youth are not well targeted in policies and are not even considered a priority for most low-income developing countries (LIDCs) and their governments. Even the ministries of youth are usually combined with another sector such as sports or culture and they lack resources (Bennell, 2007).

Rural youth in developing countries face many challenges in different fields such as education, health, nutrition, and employment. Around 140 million youth are considered illiterate and the governmental initiatives regarding preparing them to do productive work is weak (Atchoarena & Gasperini, 2003; Bennell, 2007). In the Arab region, extremely high unemployment and under-employment are faced by 100 million youth. A significant portion of active youth in the area- around one third- are unemployed and it is very common to work informally or go through unpaid family labor (Chaaban, 2013). Many states in developing countries do not have enough resources to conduct necessary skills training programs for youth in rural areas that could help them find jobs and secure a better livelihood. Youth development remains at their bottom list despite the fact that assessments reveal that youth-oriented activities are required and desired in rural communities (Bennell, 2007). Given the many youth development gaps these governments left, another entity had to address them.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) stepped in with their various development projects that target rural youth and empower them in different ways the state could not. Despite the increasing number of such projects in developing countries, there are debates pertaining to the effectiveness of these projects, whether they address the needs of rural youth or not, and whether they provide easy fixes or solutions with long-term viability. Despite NGOs' intentions to empower the rural youth and provide them with services the state could not offer, many commentators have claimed that NGOs have failed to address rural youth's needs. In fact, local and national NGOs are believed by some scholars to have lost touch with the local communities and have shifted their focus instead on applying ready-made programs developed in Western Europe and the United States (Steiner-Khamsi, 1998). Local contexts, despite their

importance to rural people, are hardly understood or considered by NGOs (Bonino &

Donini, 2009). Many of them have also failed, according to some critics, in making

significant impact in the lives of their beneficiaries (Zaidi, 1999). Moreover, the

sustainability of projects along with skills and knowledge retained by beneficiaries after

the project ends is often neglected as "success" is viewed by NGOs and donors as

something that can be simply measured by indicators reported without assessing long-

term effects (M. Edwards & Hulme, 1996).Therefore, achieving development, which is

the core objective of many NGOs operating in rural areas, becomes questionable.

In Lebanon, the case is not different. In fact, Lebanon is known for the high

number of NGOs despite it being a small country of 10,452 km^2. Proliferation of NGOs

increased after the civil war ended (1990) where NGOs were in charge of most service

provision in the absence of public bureaucracy (AbouAssi, 2006, 2013). When the

private sector, the state, and the market failed to meet demands and the state was

perceived with mistrust, NGOs took over (AbouAssi, 2015; Smith & Grønbjerg, 2006;

Steinberg, 2006; Wagner, 2000). Moreover, has the needed political liberty and freedom

of speech that makes the climate more hospitable for NGOs (AbouAssi, 2015; Brown &

Kalegaonkar, 2002; Clemens, 2006). It was estimated that there were over 15,000

NGOs in Lebanon serving a population of four million, out of which 5,000 are

registered, and only 700 are active on a regular basis (AbouAssi, 2006). Today,

Lebanon is facing all sorts of challenges pertaining to all the sectors and this further

invites more development projects and more NGOs existence.

Development projects that target youth in Lebanon, rural youth in particular, are

countless yet the impact is not very effective nor sustainable as the youth keep suffering

from social and economic issues. The services provided by the NGOs are effective most

of the time according to the reports, but the long-term success and sustainability are not measured, not found in these published reports, nor requested by the donor. On a macro-level, nothing significant seems to change so maybe it is time to pay attention to what the youth really need for them to have a better livelihood and design programs that accommodate those needs.

Given the limited research done on NGOs development projects targeting rural youth in Lebanon, this research aims to give voice to rural youth for them to state their actual needs to have a better living. At the same time, it could be an eye opener to some NGOs that are planning new development projects for youth in Lebanon where they realize that their work can be more effective if youth's needs are researched properly and centralized in the project design and implementation.

The main research question raised in this study is: "Are youth development agriculture-related projects implemented by NGOs in Lebanon tailored to the needs of rural youth?" To answer the question, the following sub questions are addressed:

A. How do the past and current projects implemented by NGOs in rural Lebanon tackle youth needs to secure a better livelihood?

B. How should NGO agendas align with the needs of the rural youth to promote rural development?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Failure of the State

The states in developing countries have often failed in addressing youth needs, especially those related to securing employment (Bennell, 2007). Looking at the Arab world for the past fifty years, youth unemployment has been a major trait characterizing its economic development performance. The economic growth failed to absorb the massive youth transitioning into the labor world despite its improvement over time. Moreover, in-spite-of governmental efforts to reform the business ecosystem and encourage investments, the regional private investments contributing to economic growth is among the lowest worldwide. Regional productive economic growth has been affected by other factors facing many countries such political instability, armed conflicts, poor macroeconomic conditions, and politically excluding considerable portions of society that include youth and women (Chaaban, 2013). Lebanon is one of the countries suffering from high depts for example, while other countries such as Yemen are exposed to oil production fluctuations (World Bank, 2013).

Moreover, most Arab governments lack a national employment strategy that recognizes labor market challenges and tackle them consistently even though they have designated ministries such as the ministries of labor. The main reasons for having minimal Active Labor Market Policies (ALMP) in these countries are the states' failure in addressing the issue of skilled workers migration, and the failure of policy makers to tackle the problem of high reservation wages whereby workers are discouraged from

obtaining low-skilled employment, especially in agriculture and construction sectors, and instead these jobs are filled by foreigners (Chaaban, 2013).

2.2. Introduction to NGOs

NGOs are private organizations that are independent of the state, but they have a major impact on the political actions and the socio-economic conditions in the country. Their main mandates as value-based organizations are to reach out to the poor and marginalized that are often neglected by the governments, promote their interests, provide relief, and support the communities through development programs (Clarke, 1998) funded through donations provided locally or internationally. The number of NGOs in the developing countries has been continuously on the rise and it is estimated around a few thousands such as the case of Lebanon to over 3 million in India according to The Central Statistical Institute in India (2009). Many of these NGOs focus on rural development as the poorest and most marginalized people reside in rural areas. Rural development aims at enhancing the social and economic situation of the rural poor (World Bank, 1975). This concept is utilized by NGOs in their practices to empower rural people with low-income by increasing their living standards and helping them become self-sustainable (Lele, 1975).

2.3. Debates about NGOs as an Alternative to the State

NGOs are different and operate at different levels and strategies, so it is unfair to overgeneralize any conclusion about their functions or results. However, given their proliferation in huge numbers in developing countries, debates have been stirred repeatedly among scholars and development practitioners. Indeed, some view ad hoc

aid's effect provided by NGOs similar to that of a pain killer that works temporarily without providing long-lasting results where the beneficiaries are not equipped with the right skills and tools to be independent (Awekeya & Bardy, 2017). Conversely, others view NGOs' work as a necessity given the many gaps left unfilled by the state, provided that this work goes hand in hand with the government and other stakeholders, includes people's needs and voices (Henderson, 1991), and follows a holistic approach to increase effectiveness. A recurring question many have raised, "Will the state die as the NGOs thrive?" (Obiyan, 2005) or is it possible that NGOs offer better service provision that makes a better "philanthropic state" where implementing services becomes more efficient and valid with the help of "well-intentioned outsiders" (Brass, 2010)?

The main criticism NGOs face pertains to the idea of how dangerous it is for such private organizations funded by the powerful locals or international agencies to replace the state and its public institutions, especially in rural areas that are inhabited by voiceless people and struggling youth who hold voting power; and thereby weakening the role and image of the government. "NGO activity presents the most serious challenges to the imperatives of statehood in the realms of territorial integrity, security, autonomy and revenue" (Fernando & Heston, 1997). On the other hand, many scholars argue that NGOs help maintain the image of the state by working in rural areas and working with people the government cannot reach due to lack of resources. NGOs are believed by some scholars to improve the performance of the states in reality and in people's eyes as they help in rebuilding the government by establishing networks of crucial actors (Brass, 2010; Roitman, 2005) and building capacities. To many scholars, NGOs are part of the state and work with it rather than against it. Tocqueville mentioned that NGOs in America empowered the weak state by providing social

services (Brass, 2010). Similarly, civil organizations are known to enhance the state's work in northern Italy (Leonardi, Nanetti, & Putnam, 2001). NGOs are repeatedly preferred as services providers by donors and development agencies because their services are considered by many to be more transparent, liable, adaptable, efficient, representative, and participatory than the state (Brass, 2010; Bratton, 1989; Fowler, 1991; Oloo, 2004).

2.4. Cases from Africa

Looking more closely into the African developing countries after their independence, states have risen, overpromised big achievements, and faced bigger failures, so NGOs proliferation took place. These NGOs are seen as threats to many of these states and have been described as a "security threat" by the former president of Kenya, Moi (Kameri-Mbote, 2000). Despite the African governments' success in many of the promises they made for their people regarding providing services and welfare and creating thousands of job opportunities in different development sectors (Mkandawire, 2001), and them being seen as a trusted paternal figure (Schatzberg, 2001), this changed with time as economic policies failed and governments could not handle the economic crises faced such as reduction in industrial capability, oil shocks, and reduction of prices of world market commodities in addition to many other factors. This is when these governments sought the funds of the International Financial Institution and had to adopt policies and beliefs that regarded NGOs and other private organizations as more efficient entities capable of providing better service provision. Government budgets and expenditures in all kinds of service sectors greatly dropped in the 1980s and 1990s. "Especially in the remotest regions of the African countryside, governments often have

had little choice but to cede responsibility for the provision of basic services..." (Brass, 2010; Bratton, 1989). This is when NGOs stepped in and shifted from relief and charity work, and tried to fill the gaps by offering development related services in rural areas, previously provided by the African states, that cover health, agriculture, and livelihood…

However, some scholars consider that sometimes international NGOs have close affiliation with the state and depend on its support for their survival, thereby it is not always the case that NGOs function independently from the governments (Tvedt, 1998). Moreover, projects implemented by rural NGOs are not always distinct from those implemented by governments and those working as public service providers can be viewed as a part of the private market segment (Igoe & Kelsall, 2005).

Igoe and Kelsall (2005) highlight that "African NGOs became a growth industry in a time where most other African sectors were in decline". This caused the surfacing of NGOs existing only on paper in the early 1990s, briefcase NGOs, which aimed to raise funds (Igoe & Kelsall, 2005). Higher numbers of existing NGOs in a country are often an indicator of the government failure in providing enough developmental services. For example, upon the government collapse in Uganda, NGOs providing social services have increased greatly in the 1970s and 1980s (Barr, Fafchamps, & Owens, 2005). NGOs are substituting the absent state in Somalia (Pérouse de Montclos, 2005). Similarly, in Lebanon the upsurge of NGOs is an indicator of a to a weak government (Ben Néfissa, 2005).

2.5. National Youth Policies by States and Rural Development

One of the biggest shortcomings of governments in developing countries that is recently being addressed by NGOs is empowering youth, especially those residing in rural areas, to have a better livelihood and become productive individuals in their societies. Rural youth development is hindered by factors the states failed to overcome such as political instability, armed conflicts, economic depression, women and youth political exclusion (Chaaban, 2013) and implementing proper national youth policies .

A study by Phillips and Pereznieto (2019) reviewed 57 national youth policies in developing countries to understand how governments addressed rural youth development. It was found that 17 of those policies did not mention rural youth at all while 40 addressed them, but with different levels that range from mentioning them to referring to rural youth as a targeted group (24 policies). However, only a few included a thorough rural youth development vision and strategies (Phillips & Pereznieto, 2019). Lebanon is among those countries that in fact mentions briefly rural youth in the national youth policy. However, this policy which was written by a group of NGOs representatives and youth belonging to various political parties, facilitated and funded by foreign agencies, and approved by the Council of Ministers as a "roadmap" for the MoYS is seen by Harb as a policy issue wish list that should be addressed rather than an actual youth policy (Harb, 2016). The way it is written and the fact that it was not initiated by the state raises a lot of questions about how the government regards youth and their importance to the country. In fact, MoYS in Lebanon relies heavily on international organizations such as EU and UN agencies and foreign donations to sponsor and support all activities related to youth including public policy formulation.

Even NGOs did not prioritize rural youth development in the past. In 2005, an overview by the Economic Commission for Africa on Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper announced that "youth are still being overlooked" (Bennell, 2007). This has recently changed and now youth, especially rural youth, are receiving more attention in development projects implemented by NGOs, but the question is, is this attention directed to their actual needs? To answer this question, we must first understand the needs of rural youth, then investigate how development projects implemented by NGOs address them.

2.6. Rural Youth Needs

So, what do rural youth say they need and aspire for? The largest employer of youth in many developing countries, especially Africa, is the agro-food sector as it offers the best entry point for fostering inclusive economic growth which enhances the livelihoods of rural youth (Yeboah, 2018). However, there is a general debate about agriculture not attracting youth today. Many studies across the world have been conducted to better understand the needs of rural youth. A four-year study engaging with 1500 person in 10 countries and 23 research locations included opinions of youth and their parents, as well as authority representatives confirmed that farming is not appealing for the rural youth, they rather prefer using their education in getting formal employment, and their expectation regarding employment increases with the education level. Also, they showed great interest in technology and the possibility to shift back to agriculture if it is modernized and cash-based. (Leavy & Hossain, 2014). Another study focused on rural youth aspirations in 7 developing countries included 50 gender-separated focus group discussions with youth of different socio-economic and education

backgrounds that represent their communities confirmed that their main preference is securing formal employment (white and blue-collar jobs), but their dreams are not achieved despite them being educated. They were disappointed in the unfulfilled promise that their education would secure them those jobs. Their aspirations, however, did not fall far from the agriculture sector as it was the third most prevalent choice provided that this desired job is modernized (Elias et al., 2018a). Despite the overlap in many aspirations, women had a different outlook regarding agriculture. It appears that social and gender norms are bias against women which discourages them from considering a "male occupation" as they are given limited opportunities and autonomy (Elias et al., 2018a).

Moreover, a new OECD study that also looked at career aspirations of youth (aged 15-29) in urban and rural setting of 32 developing and transition countries concluded that these youth had high career ambitions as they joined the labor market and aspired to attain a job in the public sector or in a highly skilled occupation regardless of their education background. However, these aspirations are not realistic when they are met with the reality of the available jobs, even for those who were highly educated (OECD, 2017). Research shows that rural youth are not against agriculture or farming per se; however, today's deteriorating situation in the agriculture sector with all its problem related to land access, lack of agricultural resources, capital, proper public investment in small-scale farming and infrastructure, managing agri-food technological changes, maintaining incomes, providing active youth labor market programs...is causing this outmigration but that does not mean it is a permanent one (Ajani, Mgbenka, & Onah, 2015; Leavy & Hossain, 2014; White, 2019).

Youth unemployment percentages in the Arab countries affected by poverty and/or conflict is over 40 per cent (Chaaban, 2013). Half the number of unemployed youths represents first-time job seekers (Dhillon & Yousef, 2011), which is the highest number in the world. Unemployment and job-hunting periods can take up to three years in countries like Egypt and Morocco making educated youth unemployment rates in Arab states even higher (Chaaban, 2010). Another widespread issue is youth vulnerable employment, representing around 30 per cent of the employed in Arab countries (ILO, 2012), whereby youth are engaged in unpaid family work and lack benefits and proper social protection (Chaaban, 2013).

Moreover, another major issue faced in developing countries is the neglect of skills development needed for employment which is not present in many poverty reduction strategies or even in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Palmer, 2007). Even educated rural youth around the world face challenges while seeking employment due to many reasons, including the discrepancy between education and labor demand and lack of required skills. In many Arab countries, unskilled rural youth employment is dominant (Chaaban, 2013). In Lebanon, skill-mismatch issues affect greatly the transition of youth from school to work where a great number of fresh graduates do not find jobs locally and a significant percentage end up working in jobs unrelated to their education (Dibeh, Fakih, & Marrouch, 2019). Mass youth unemployment and underemployment is expected to characterize most nations' economies soon. Compared to the urban youth, rural youth require a longer time as they transition from school to work and they are 40% more probably working informally without a contract (ILO, 2017).

The Human Capital Theory which states that employability is increased by education is not credible and does not work for them because acquiring degrees is not enough in this case, they must have relevant skills and proper connections (Bessant, Farthing, & Watts, 2017; White, 2021). For example, thousands of rural fresh graduates in Eastern Indonesia work as semi-volunteers in hospitals and schools without any contract for years while not having steady salaries even though they are minimal (White, 2019). Young educated rural men in India who cannot find employment occupy themselves in "timepass" activities such as taking several courses and classes (Jeffrey, 2010). This timepass is mirrored in Northern and sub-Saharan Africa where these young people are suspended in a state of "waithood", until they are in their thirties. Even with the right qualifications, getting decent jobs might require long unpaid "internships" for them to acquire the needed skills (Honwana, 2014).

2.7. How are NGOs Addressing Those Needs?

Research shows various studies that are either rooting for NGOs' much needed interventions in rural development as they fill government gaps or attacking these organizations that work against or outside the government and use a lot of money and resources on implementing parachuted projects designed by donors without necessarily considering the actual needs of the stakeholders or adapting the projects to fit the environment of the targeted beneficiaries.

In developing countries, NGOs are believed to accelerate development in rural areas where their projects help channeling resources that benefit rural people (Chitongo, 2013). One of the biggest challenges states and donor agencies face in these agriculturally neglected areas is food insecurity. The global proliferation of NGOs

focusing on development that escalated in the 1980s and 1990s had direct effects on the poor rural families in marginalized areas (Edwards, 1998) where they have been appraised on their great role (Sahley, 1995) and even regarded as a remedy to household food insecurity issues. They were seen as "a magic bullet which can be fired in any direction and though often without very much evidence, will still find its target." (Chitongo, 2013; Edwards, 1998) This is also applicable for other areas such as health, education, economic development, and job creation… where NGOs work toward developing rural areas and empowering the people, especially rural youth. As much as their work is highly valued by beneficiaries and different stakeholders in the communities, NGOs are not necessarily considering the importance of sustainability and effectiveness of their work as they are not always designing and implementing their projects based on actual rural needs, taking on an active participatory approach that engages rural stakeholders, coordinating their actions with the government to save efforts and avoid duplication (Agba, Akpanudoedehe, & Stephen, 2014), and abiding by a multi-faceted holistic approach that targets different levels simultaneously (Awekeya & Bardy, 2017).

2.8. The Case of Lebanon

Like many other Arab countries, Lebanon's economy has been suffering, mainly increase in unemployment rates, since 2005 due to political instability. This instability has been shaped by political deadlock, local armed conflict, and regional turbulence (Chaaban, 2013). This costs the Lebanese economy between 3.76 per cent and 6.28 per cent of its GDP between 2005 and 2007 (Salti, 2012). Lebanon's growth rates further decreased to reach the lowest levels at only 2 per cent in 2012 (IMF, 2013), and influx

of foreign investment estimates in 2012 are about 70 per cent lower than in 2010 (Audi, 2013). This was coupled by a significant increase in unemployment in Lebanon from 8.6 per cent in 2010 to 10.3 per cent in 2012 (ILO Database). All this has caused thousands of Lebanese to protest (since the October revolution in 2019) against the government and all political parties that are held accountable for the collapse of the economy (Chaaban, 2013). By 2014, the unemployment rate reached 20.7% (World Bank, 2014) but is currently estimated to be much higher especially among youth due to the current economic depression Lebanon is facing along with the Covid-19 outbreak implications on the various sectors and economy.

2.9. Shortcomings of NGOS in Lebanon

Locally, an assessment of capacity building needs of NGOs in Lebanon (NEEDS, 2009) aims to provide information on how to better design capacity building plans and training for local NGOs. Although the report assesses human resources, strategies, and program performance of these NGOs, it is used here to shed light on some of the shortcomings of local NGOs that hinder them from properly addressing the needs of the community and rural youth. The study included data from about 3500 registered NGOs as well as interviews and 17 focus group discussions with different NGOs representatives. The main interesting findings were that most NGOs, except for those that have board members from the private sector and academia, do not go through a strategic program planning process, nor do they have a proper system for assessing needs. In fact, new programs are initiated either through a staff based on his/her own perception of a certain need, or through the board that has secured funding and want to cover a new geographical area regardless of the type of project or whether it is already

being implemented by another organization, or finally through donors who have their own fixed plans and agendas, which is the most famous way for many NGOs depending on international funds. In all three cases, the community, rural youth, and main stakeholders are not consulted. An interesting finding was that smaller NGOs operating in rural Lebanon stated that there's minimal need for planning and prioritization. They believe their services are positive to the community regardless of the type of intervention because in those areas, there is a need for all themes at all levels. Also, none of the participating NGOs envisioned a possible negative impact of their projects such as disempowering local structures or aid dependency, knowing that most NGOs do not even formulate an exit strategy. In addition to that, there are a lot of questions raised concerning the impact of their projects, knowing that many of local NGOs do not have proper set monitoring and evaluation methods or staff. This has been highlighted by donors as well. In fact, impact is rarely measured beyond the project funding stage in all countries, which is problematic because it would not be known if the project was effective on the long-term. A study looking at youth employment in sub-Saharan Africa states that effective evaluation of different types of interventions is limited due to the scarcity of rigorous programs impact evaluations (Betcherman & Khan, 2015).

Moreover, it is important to highlight the relationship between political parties in Lebanon and the civil society to better understand the dynamics of NGOs development projects as well as how funding is directed. Sectarian elites chase their socioeconomic and political benefits at the expense of civil society organizations (CSOs) and some civil society actors use the sectarian political system and its resources to benefit on a personal or organizational levels. This allows sectarian elites to infiltrate, surround, or co-opt CSOs and to spread their clientelist networks to CSOs (Clarke, 2006).

Similarly, many NGOs in Lebanon function as economic and social arms of various political sectarian parties, thus deepening the religious and political schism in Lebanon. The main causes to these types of NGOs ineffectiveness that may cause the Lebanese social fabric to grow weaker are vaguely demarcated target audiences, poorly incoherent key messages, and poorly defined values. The discontent of inter-NGO cooperation and so the government also critically affects NGOs' efficiency (Kreidie & Itani, 2016).

2.10. Funding Channeled Away from Actual Needs

Recently more programs are focusing on youth aiming to promote youth employment creation through entrepreneurship. Bennell (2007) points out the low quality national vocational training systems targeting youth that many developing countries have, yet organizations have very limited funds for youth capacity skill training and development in the agriculture sector despite it being a need and a government shortcoming due to lack of resources. The question is why are funds dedicated to entrepreneurship which has proven limited sustainability rather than channeling the money to cover an obvious need? NGOs and church organizations in many developing countries have vocational training targeting rural school dropouts, but the funding limitations reduced enrolments drastically (Bennell, 2007). Again, why redirect the fund from a successful model? Many studies highlight the importance of entrepreneurship, especially for rural youth. It is found by some as a successful model representing both hope and impact in marginalized communities. Entrepreneurial projects are believed by some to revive economic growth, generate employment, and empower marginalized communities focusing on poor people and women (Abimbola &

Agboola, 2011; Thomas & Mueller, 2000). They can improve people's quality of life and enhance the economy in general (Adejumo, 2000) in both developed industrialized countries where new jobs are created to balance those lost by downsizing and dying industries are repositioned (Thomas and Mueller, 2000); and LIDCs where deteriorating government-owned enterprises are replaced which generates employment (Abumere, Arimah and Jerome, 1998) and disadvantaged people are empowered through challenging adverse situations (Benner, 1987). However, many studies have also shown that entrepreneurs, especially rural ones, suffer and fight to survive due to lack of experience and technical knowledge, limitation in mentorship, and access to credit (Adeyanju, Mburu, & Mignouna, 2020; Fayolle & Gailly, 2015; Katrodia & Sibanda, 2018). In fact, some studies show that income generation is not even increased by entrepreneurship programs. Cho and Honorati (2014) analyzed 37 impact assessment studies, focused either on training or both training and micro-finance, and concluded that these programs do not significantly affect income. They also studied the "Effectiveness of Various Entrepreneurship Programmes in Developing Countries" and discovered that these programs did not help launch businesses nor expand them (Cho & Honorati, 2014). Given the debates about rural entrepreneurship, funding is still pouring in as opposed to a real need highlighted by the literature which is capacity skill training and development in different vocations including agriculture-related ones.

These questions can be simply answered by looking at what donors are interested in funding and why. It is no secret that NGOs are funded by states that support capitalism. Many scholars perceive NGOs as a trojan horse for capitalism. They believe that NGOs play the role of mediators between the people and the government. They build a good image for corporations and governing ideology as well as the illusion

of fighting for change. This helps suppress people's anger and turning conflicts into calm and totally harmless dissatisfaction (Blok, 2013) . They believe that capitalists are investing when they finance the NGO sector and as all financiers, they anticipate a return on their investments. This return or gain comes back not as a direct profit but rather allows capitalists to gain much bigger and more guaranteed revenues. This is how the NGOs help keep capitalism alive. Moreover, when it comes to states funding NGOs (mainly from tax money), some believe that similarly to corporations, states expect strengthening capitalism and the rich's position as a return on their investment. "That is the great illusion of democracy, and the NGO sector helps keep it alive. That staged "mechanism of struggle" is not able to bring about any social change (nor was it created for such purpose), but certainly poses as such; so, all those who believe that their demands can be reached through NGO activities, will most likely completely exclude all other methods of struggle" (Blok, 2013, p. 7). This way the state wins everything, its authority is protected, and the people are deceived by the false mechanism of struggle turning into peaceful and compliant citizens.

The literature review provided opposing views about NGOs' interventions when it comes to filling the rural youth developmental gaps left by the developing countries' governments. While many scholars argue that NGOs have the right intentions and are doing their best to attend to the needs of rural communities, others believe that many of the needs highlighted by the rural youth are not properly addressed. One of the major needs NGOs are not successful in targeting is employment whereby rural youth, highly educated or not, enter a very competitive market where they must go through unpaid internships, pass their time doing different activities, and keep on waiting for any kind of paid job to make a living. Another issue highlighted by the literature is the neglect of

skills development needed for employment and skill mismatch found in LIDCs

including Lebanon. Moreover, many NGOs are already working on skills development,

however, they might not be necessarily considering the importance of sustainability and

effectiveness of their work or simply going about it through the least successful models.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The objective of the study is to investigate whether the development projects implemented by NGOs in Lebanon address rural youth needs to promote rural and agriculture development. Qualitative research approach was adopted as it allows discussion to flow among participants and allows researchers to comprehend a person's behavior by providing them with his/her understanding of a situation (Krathwohl, 1998).

3.1. Methods

Focus group discussions, a survey, and semi-structured interviews, the most utilized methods in qualitative research (Becker, Bryman, & Ferguson, 2012), were used since they help exploring the "what", "why", and "how" aspects of the study in a deeper sense rather than highlighting the quantitative elements (Green, 2014). FGDs provide a great opportunity to observe individual participants interacting in a group setting and coming up with ideas and arguments as part of this group (Becker et al., 2012). Moreover, qualitative semi-structured interviews give the researchers the chance to comprehend various situations, rebuild past incidents, and understand the various political or social processes happening in a society or among a certain social group (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

3.2. FGD, Interview, and Survey Methodology

Over the course of 5 weeks, June-July 2021, fifty staff from various NGOs in Lebanon were reached out to. Participants were sampled through a combination of personal contacts, a database of contact info by UNDP, and snowball referrals from interviewees. Participants were recruited through email requests. Fifty NGOs staff that include managers, coordinators, MEAL staff, field staff, HR staff, and officers were contacted. Twenty of them expressed their interest in participating in the study. Twenty semi-structured interviews were conducted with staff that worked for over thirty different NGOs and over fifty development projects in rural areas in Lebanon. The twenty interviews were conducted online, and audio recorded with prior verbal and written consent of participants, then the recordings were manually transcribed and analyzed.

As for the youth, they were reached out to through the twenty NGOs staff that participated in the study where they forwarded the invitation email (via email, WhatsApp, Facebook, or any platform they share with beneficiaries) to their programs' beneficiaries (total thirty programs). In the invitation, the youth were provided with two optional requests, either they could fill out a 10 to15-minute survey or sign up for an online focus group discussion. The NGOs staff had no way of knowing who is interested in participating in the FGD or who filled the survey as the interested youth had to directly click on the link to either fill out the survey or register (any email address or phone number) so that they can be invited to the focus group discussion. The survey and focus group discussion with the youth contain the same questions as shown in Appendix 4. Ninety-eight youth (programs' beneficiaries) were interested in

participating in the study. Sixty-three youth filled out the survey and an additional thirty-five youth participated in the four focus group discussions.

Sampling and recruitment were limited due to time constraints. Though a good number of NGOs were contacted, the limited time allocated for field research did not allow the sample to be fairly representative of all rural areas in Lebanon. Most participating NGOs interventions are in North Bekaa, South, and Mount Lebanon, with only two NGOs present in North Lebanon and few in other parts of Bekaa. With prior consent, each interview and FGD was audio recorded and then manually transcribed.

3.3. Analysis Methodology

Thematic analysis was used since it is an important qualitative research method that allows researchers to develop a deep understanding of complicated data in a systematic way. It helps identify patterns or themes within data and analyze, and report them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Moreover, through this method, both inductive and deductive approaches can be used in data analysis. In a deductive approach, themes can be identified based on prior assumptions while in an inductive approach, a thematic framework is developed based on coding of collected data. This method helped in using prior assumptions to establish initial themes which were refined and kept being refined inductively as the transcribed data was reviewed many times and coded. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) phases of thematic analysis, the six steps outlined were followed:

1. Familiarization with data – transcribing audio recordings, reading transcriptions carefully along with the notes taken and generating initial ideas

2. Generate initial codes – systematically coding interesting elements of data and

aggregating data under these general codes

3. Search for themes – grouping codes into themes, identifying data that match the themes, and establishing links between them

4. Review themes – forming a thematic map by analyzing themes and their relation to coded data

5. Define and name themes – establishing the story of the analysis by defining each theme comprehensibly

6. Produce the report – selecting interesting examples, further analyzing the selected data, and linking it to the literature and research questions

This study assumed individual perceptions and opinions about NGOs interventions, their effectiveness, success, and sustainability, and whether they address rural youth needs or not. NGOs staff and beneficiaries (youth) are the units of analysis as the study was built on their inputs through interviews, FGDs, and a survey.

3.4. Description of Participants

A total of 20 NGOs staff participated in the study where one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with them. 60% of the staff are females and 40% are males. Almost all of them held at least a university degree. Their ages range from 22 to 38 years old with an average age of 28.8. The NGOs staff discussed projects implemented by 30 different NGOs they have worked for, and the main sector interventions are agriculture, entrepreneurship, Capacity building, and vocational training (Table 1).

Gender	Age	Education Level	Main Intervention Sectors	Location
Females (60%)	Range: 22-38 years old	95% hold an undergraduate degree	Agriculture, Entrepreneurship Capacity building Vocational training	North Lebanon South Lebanon Mount Lebanon North Bekaa Bekaa Akkar
Males (40%)	Average: 28.8 years old	25% hold a Master's Degree		

Table 1: Statistics of NGO Staff

As for the youth, 98 total youth who are NGOs beneficiaries participated in the study. 35 of them participated in the 4 FGDs held and 63 filled the online survey. 60% of total youth who participated are Females and 40% are males. Their ages range between 18 and 29 years old. 81.5% of them are Lebanese and 18.5% are non-Lebanese. Most of them are educated; 50.1% have university degrees, 16.3% have master's degrees while 16.7% finished high school, and 12.6% dropped out during middle school. As for the personal status, most of them are single while only 19% are married and have dependents. Only 14.15% of them are employed, out of which only 19% have a full-time job while the majority (81%) have a part-time job that is mostly unrelated to their field of study. Concerning the financial status, on a scale from 1 to 5 (1: very bad conditions/in dept and 5: very good/have savings), the majority (57.85%) self-ranked their status at (2), 26.75% described it as average (3), and 11.6% considered themselves in a very bad condition (1) (Appendix 2)

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Thematic analysis was conducted following Braun and Clarke's approach where the audio recordings of the interviews and FGDs were transcribed and read carefully, then important points were highlighted, and then coded. Four main themes and sub-themes were produced and outlined in the below table (Table 2).

The first theme is youth needs, with two sub-themes of youth needs assessment conducted by NGOs and needs voiced by rural youth. The second theme is success, with its three sub-themes of meeting program objectives, meeting rural youth expectations, and indicators and success rate. The third theme is sustainability, with its two sub-themes of long-lasting impact, and capacity building. Finally, the fourth theme identified is development, with its two sub-themes of personal and professional development, and rural development.

Main Themes	Sub-Themes
1- Youth Needs	1.1 Youth needs assessment conducted by NGOs 1.2 Needs voiced by rural youth
2- Success	2.1 Meeting Program Objectives 2.2 Meeting rural youth expectations 2.3 Indicators and success rate
3- Sustainability	3.1 Long-lasting impact 3.2 Capacity building
4- Development	4.1 Personal and professional development 4.2 Rural development

Table 2: Main themes and sub-themes

4.1. First Main Theme: Youth Needs

4.1.1. Youth Needs Assessment Conducted by NGOs

During the interviews with NGOs staff, the focus was on whether youth need assessment was conducted prior project implementation. Some interviewees who were present during project design and planning or were part of the process explained that needs assessments were based on evaluating other projects that took place in different rural areas at least years before their project started and their own observation in the field as well as other external factors, such as challenges the country is facing. For example, one interviewee said:

> The country was experiencing a lot of changes, the refugee crisis, poverty on the rise, youth unemployment… This is when I thought of pivoting the NGO's idea to have more impact on the youth's lives. The vision and mission of the NGO in terms of empowering youth and developing their talents was kept but now we made sure that talents helped the youth make an income either through employment or entrepreneurship. The program has evolved greatly since then, but it still centered around entrepreneurship, a concept the world is shifting towards.

Other interviewees talked about assessing the type of value chains to focus their agricultural project on rather than assessing people's needs. To them, the community, the farmers, and the youth are present in a rural community where they rely on farming and agricultural practices, so rather than asking them about their obvious needs, they assess the technical part of the project that includes project feasibility, types of activities, agricultural inputs and outputs, number of beneficiaries... Once these aspects are ready, they conduct their outreach to recruit participants through databases shared by municipalities in the area where they sometimes validate this data themselves through field visits. However, they do not ask participants about their needs during that stage.

On the other hand, several interviewees were surprised by the question and described the whole process of project design and implementation as a top-down approach. They explained how the needs assessment concept is taken lightly by such organizations. NGOs usually do not have Monitoring and Evaluation staff on board during that phase of the project, mainly due to funding limitations. This means the assessments could be done, if any, by a non-specialized person who is merely running a couple of focus group discussions and interviewees with relevant stakeholders for the sake of validating what they have already designed. It is not done in a systematic or academic way. It is very informal and usually data is not collected and presented properly. One of the participants seemed very angry about the approach his NGO adopts and said:

> It is a top-down approach all the way from project design to project execution. Needs assessment is very mechanistic. Information is usually falsified or not accurate at best. What has been written and agreed upon by the donor rarely ever changes. Needs assessment is merely a way for an organization to introduce its project to stakeholders in rural areas (ministries, municipalities, other NGOs...) and if potential beneficiaries are addressed, it would be for outreach purposes. Rarely opinions of stakeholders are taken into consideration. If they are, this does not affect the objectives, outcomes, and indicators of the project; only tiny unimportant implementation-related details here and there.

In general, almost all answers provided by the interviewees validate the issue of NGOs not conducting a needs assessment, or at least a proper one staging the youth or beneficiaries at the center whereby their opinions and input are taken into consideration and their voices are heard. This was further supported by youth themselves during the focus group discussions and surveys filled where out of 98 youth, only one person mentioned that he was part of a project's needs assessment related to peacebuilding where he was asked to fill a survey. However, he explains how no one contacted him after or told him anything about the project. All the other youth had no idea what a needs assessment is and explained how they were asked to fill surveys or had a phone call to assess the project and staff during the project or after it ended.

Despite the good intentions NGOs might have in terms of benefitting rural youth or communities in general, needs assessment is not done properly because it requires a lot of time and money while donors do not usually fund pre-project assessments or activities. It is enough for many NGOs to rely on some published reports, their personal experience and field observation, donor's agenda, their own vision and mission and even ambitions as they write a proposal, test it through a pilot, and then pivot it based on assessments and lessons learned. Some even think that youth or beneficiaries in general may not know what they need. They are not experts when it comes to learning new skills or information. They might not know how beneficial this program would be to them and how positively it can change their lives. All staff considered youth's input essential to the project development, but some believe they should not be included in the design phase as they might not understand what is being offered and perceive it negatively. A trainer explains this through his own words:

> I do not encourage the idea of including youth in planning training topics as they lack expertise. It is more efficient to get their feedback post training because only then, they would understand and learn the taught concepts and skills and so they can properly assess how beneficial they are to them.

Not conducting needs assessment by NGOs can be further be understood by examining how close NGOs are to the rural communities. Many scholars argue that NGOs are not close to rural people as they tend to avoid rural areas and prefer to be located in urban settings where roads paved and infrastructure is better thus, forming "development hotspots" (Bebbington, 2004). Locations of NGOs, according to a large study done in Kenya, did not relate to geographical areas where people in desperate need of social services reside in (Brass, 2012). Moreover, when NGOs do not have time or means to do needs assessments, as it is mostly the case, they rely on their own

personal contacts and networks to select the location for project implementation (Bebbington, 2004). Also, international donors do not necessary provide aid to the neediest countries but rather their decision to channel aid is affected by strategic and political deliberations (Collier & Dollar, 2002). Funds are not dispersed to where it is greatly needed but where there's an intersection between NGOs' mission and donors' interests (Tvedt, 1998). Moreover, religion is another factor influencing funding. In Pakistan, for example, the donors' religious inclinations are coupled with those of NGOs (Tariq et al., 2012). International secular donors provide donations to secular NGOs while religious donors usually give donations to religious NGOs.

4.1.2. Needs Voiced by Rural Youth

When the 35 youth who participated in the FGDs as well as the 63 youth who filled the surveys were asked to reflect on their current needs and their needs prior participating in any development project, which some of them go back to three years ago, one answer kept coming up: "finding job opportunities". Most of the youth were educated, had a bachelor's degree, participated or volunteered at various projects, yet they could not find job opportunities, even if these jobs were not related to their field of studies. Over 80% were unemployed and most of those employed had a temporary part-time job they had to take to make ends meet. The list of needs raised by youth includes learning new skills like computer skills, business skills, leadership, employability, English language, funding opportunities for their business ventures, coaching.... and most of these are skills and experiences were already covered by the various projects they participated in. This means their needs have been somehow tackled by the NGOs projects whether the youth voiced them prior project design or not. However, the main

need all participants highlighted which is employment, actually securing a job, is something no project was able to cover, not now during the unprecedented economic crisis and pandemic nor three years ago where there was more stability, with the exception of a few Cash for Work initiatives that employ youth for a very short period of time to conduct certain tasks at various companies. This is a major concern for most Lebanese people and residents nowadays given the deteriorating economic situation and businesses shut down.

However, this need has been there for a long time. Youth have voiced it over and over as a main challenge and need through various programs post assessments and it was even highlighted in the literature as a main challenge facing rural youth in most developing countries (Dibeh et al., 2019; Elias et al., 2018b) and especially in the Arab region where the unemployment rates are the highest (Chaaban, 2013). Though it might not be NGOs responsibility to create jobs for youth and secure employment, they are taking over the state's role in many aspects, so why not focus on this one?

4.2. Second Main Theme: Success

4.2.1. Meeting Programs Objectives

Each program has its own set objectives that were agreed upon during the design stage. These objectives are tied to indicators drafted by NGO staff involved in the program design and agreed on by the donors. There were different objectives discussed during the interviews based on the various types of NGOs and their interventions. Mainly those objectives were related to farming knowledge and skills, agribusiness,

leadership and soft skills, entrepreneurship, launching a business, capacity building, empowerment, employability, employment, diversity, inclusion, social cohesion, peacebuilding, protection, psychosocial support, and decision making. Almost all NGOs staff interviewed discussed how objectives were met most of the time. It was easy to capture the successfulness of the objectives through the post-program surveys and interviews where most beneficiaries provided positive feedback. Moreover, feedback is taken regularly throughout the project by trainers, officers, and other staff to make sure everything is going smoothly. This is usually done through a personal initiative and this type of feedback is usually done orally and not reported back to the organization unless there is a pressing issue to fix. One of the trainers interviewed said the following:

> The general programmatic objectives do not change but the objectives within sessions slightly change according to the targeted youth, based on their education background and skills. The objectives set are always fulfilled at with at least a percentage of 85%. Whatever the youth learn now is not for the current project but for life. They can use it later in whatever situation they face, especially turning challenges to opportunities and coming up with solutions.

What is interesting though is that many youths did not identify the objectives accurately. Despite them being part of the post-project assessment and evaluation where they were asked specific questions related to the objectives, many of them could only mention one out of the many objectives. For example, for the projects related to entrepreneurship, the objectives according to staff were related to learning specific types of skills, improving employability, building connections, problem-solving, launching a business, having a sustainable business beyond 6 months, making profit, hiring staff, expanding the business to include more products or services.

However, most youth were fixated on one objective which is launching a business. Again, youth are not supposed to be experts when it comes to project design but the fact that many of them do not realize the objectives of the program that they participated in raises the question of whether youth are aware of what they have learned,

or they are just giving out answers staff would like to hear? How can program objectives be verified if the assessments are based on self-reporting?

4.2.2. Meeting Rural Youth Expectations

61% of youth who participated in the FGDs and filled the survey said that the program objectives met their expectations as well as their needs. They explained how they learned the specific set of skills they were hoping to learn through the program, or they were able to launch a business or gain enough knowledge to do that one day. However, those who said the program failed to meet their expectations were mainly referring to the fact that they were expecting to become employed or have a sustainable business a few months after the program ends. Most youth are content with the knowledge and skills they gained, and they do not regret participating in the project. They do realize the deteriorating economic situation the country is facing but they were hopeful that such programs could provide them with an advantage to compete, build connections, and improve their livelihood. Unfortunately, the acquired knowledge and skills are put aside until further notice. According to one of the youths:

> What I have learned throughout the program is amazing. I felt more confident about securing a job because I have my degree, my volunteering experience, and the skills and knowledge gained from this program. However, I feel like I am constantly failing at finding a job. I am an unemployed engineer who has been looking for a job for over 2 years now. What I have learned is very useful, but the problem is that I do not have a job. Once I secure that, I will be able to practice the skills I learned.

Only 30% of youth suggestions are taken into consideration according to one NGOs representative. The reasons vary from simple logistic related issues to suggestions not directly falling under the program objectives. When more investigation

was done, it turned out that suggestions are usually collected in two ways; either through verbal communication with one staff member who is in direct contact with the beneficiaries or through the collected surveys/assessments. In the first case, most of the times the suggestions are not communicated well, if at all, to the decision makers in the organization. In the second case, the collected data from surveys is part of a quantitative report presented to the donor so it is up to decision makers in the NGO to look at the suggestions themselves or present it to the donor so they can adjust the program according to youth's needs and suggestions. In both cases, the process is weak and faulty at best leaving little space for youth to be properly heard.

4.2.3. Indicators and Success Rate

Indicators are attributed to project objectives, and they are measured to indicate whether objectives have been met or not or whether the project was successful or not. Indicators are quantified and percentages are set from the very beginning as a reference for NGOs staff to work toward achieving. Throughout the interviews, the way indicators are derived came up and some staff, mainly M&E staff, explained how some indicators do not necessarily reflect the NGO's work or specific interventions, or even targeted beneficiaries. In the case of one big project implemented by many partner NGOs, the donors tend to develop a unifying system where all partners report on the same indicators which may or may not be relevant to their interventions. One of the M&E staff said the following:

> Indicators focus on quantity not quality. This is what donors care about. This is how success is measured. The higher the percentage is, the higher the success rate is, the more chances there are for the project to be extended and contracts renewed.

Other staff explained how assessments are done in a very limited way. To them, as local NGOs staff, working in a rural setting,

> Success is proved when beneficiaries keep coming back, when there is still a need to the services we are offering, when more beneficiaries participate in the project every year, and when more crops or trees are being planted, this shows how successful our project is.

Indicators can measure if the NGO was able to reach its objectives stated or approved by the donors. It can tell if the numbers are high enough for the project to be renewed. However, how is success defined? Is it the quantity of beneficiaries and services offered or is it the quality of the services that could have a long-lasting impact?

It is believed by some scholars that donors' insistence on setting measurable indicators and outcomes prior projects starting obstructs flexibility of implementation by NGOs (Fowler, 1993). Performance assessments indicate where funding is disbursed, and it is often given to NGOs that report successful projects based on rigid numbers and reports thus not allowing room for innovation and flexibility. Moreover, the constraints of reporting might prevent lessons learned by NGOs based on mistakes made (Easterly, 2002). NGOs often make sure that only success stories are highlighted to the donor and refrain from discussing problems faced in fear of losing extension of the program or funds (Wallace, Bornstein, & Chapman, 2007).

4.3. Third Main Theme: Sustainability

4.3.1. Long-Lasting Impact

To promote development, implemented projects must have a long-lasting impact. Otherwise, we are just patching up serious injuries with placebo solutions.

This is what one of the NGOs staff said when asked about how they viewed sustainability. Almost all interviewed staff talked about how sustainable they believe their projects are. However, long-lasting impact was never measured in any of the projects. Some projects were still in progress and impact could not be measured till at least 5-10 years from now, but other projects ended years ago, and staff had no idea about their impact, at least not formally. Just like pre-project assessments are not funded by the donor, post project assessments and follow ups are not funded after the project ends. Usually, staff follow up with beneficiaries on a quarterly basis during project implementation to note down their progress and report on indicators. A project going on for more than one year could sometimes include a yearly follow up with the beneficiaries but once it ends, no one will follow up with them.

Some staff highlighted sustainability within the project implementation, within 3-4 years of the ongoing project, and talked about change of mindsets and practices, sparking new ideas, excitement, and self-confidence. Though long-term impact was not measured beyond the scope of the project, some staff were able to see these small changes within project implementation or even after the project ended as they were still in touch with some beneficiaries. One of the interviewees was very proud to share how the 3-year project she worked on helped in changing the mindsets of rural youth who grew to accept and work with refugees, something that was near impossible to them. Increased social cohesion is one of the long-lasting impacts many projects share. Another NGOs staff shared her experience as she was the one in direct contact with youth:

> Most of the youth I talk to seem to be very inspired by the program and say that it encourages them to start their business in the future when they have the time, and they are not dealing with pressing challenges. Some are personally satisfied as they feel more confident in talking to people and getting connected. Others have learned skills that helped them find better jobs. So, all in all, the success and sustainability of the program is not only measured by the sustainability of the youth's projects, but also by all the knowledge and skills learned as well as their other takeaways.

When youth were asked about the long-term impact of the project, over 70% said that it was impactful and most of them explained how they can use skills and knowledge learned in their daily life. However, again the issue was finding a job. One of the youths interviewed explained:

> I am confident that all the skills I learned will help me in my daily life as well as in my career whether it being idea pitching, presentation skills, feasibility study, market research... but I do not have a job where I can practice all what I have learned. I wish that the project included a further phase where we (beneficiaries) are connected to companies and followed up with until we secure a job. As for the entrepreneurship project, I tried it and I loved it. I was able to launch a pilot, but I had to stop it after a few months because it takes time to break even and start making profit. I simply do not have the luxury to invest time and effort in a business project that may not survive in such a crisis. I would rather invest my time in finding a job with sustainable income that can feed me and my family.

These might be the key words many youths have been thinking of and all NGOs working on entrepreneurship projects must hear. Most small business projects launched by underprivileged youth will not last long. This has been proven by literature where for example, Cho and Honorati in their studies established that entrepreneurial programs did not lead to business launching or expansion (Cho & Honorati, 2014). Also, youth participating in this study were vocal about it. When they are too busy focused on securing food at their tables, they will not have time to be dedicated entrepreneurs. Perhaps it is time to re-think strategies when it comes to rural entrepreneurship.

Moreover, sustainability in general is a goal of almost all development projects. It may not be present as an indicator or measured or even reported on during project implementation, but it is discussed during project design and highlighted in the project description. The question is why is not sustainability measured or followed up upon after the project ends? Is it not interesting for donors to check whether their money is well spent on projects with long-lasting effects? Is not interesting or beneficial for NGOs to conduct their own post-program assessments to identify gaps or highlight success rates so they can benefit from lessons learned for other projects?

Another issue concerning sustainability was brought up by one of the interviewees, who worked with over 5 NGOs and noticed a common problem, is not sharing database. He said:

> When a project ends, data (beneficiaries database and reports) should be shared with other NGOs/projects so they can benefit from it and not re-invent the wheel. Database is important where young people benefitting from one project should be referred to other projects. We are trying to build a new community, to make actual change in youth lives, so they should be exposed to different trainings and projects over 10 years so there's real impact in their lives and in their communities. Unfortunately, many NGOs consider their database as something of their own that they can use to benefit from for other projects. They are not willing to share it with other NGOs unless maybe it's profitable for them.

Working with communities require a lot of time but funding rounds are short, thus this makes NGO work more short-lived and less sustainable (Wallace et al., 2007). The fact that many NGOs focus their efforts on polished reports to present to donors to be rewarded through more funding rather than reflecting on their beneficiaries' experience is a great contributor to lack of sustainability in implemented projects (Easterly, 2002). Moreover, minimal work is done on projects' post evaluation (Easterly 2002). For example, the New Philanthropy Capital in the UK and the Center for Effective Philanthropy in the United Sates gather and advertise standardized data on

experience, funding volume, and management but not on social changes and
transformations (Edwards, 2008).

4.3.2. Capacity Building

Capacity building is a key element in all development projects. All projects
discussed during interviews and FGDs highlighted the various capacity building
activities aimed at. They included knowledge and skills such as business planning,
budgeting, agricultural practices, public speaking, pitching, networking, social
cohesion, group work, leadership, volunteering, community engagement, political
empowerment... which aim to help youth develop on personal and professional levels.
Almost all staff interviewed were very proud of the quality of training provided to the
rural youth. They believe these capacity building activities have truly impacted their
lives in a positive way. Most youth also acknowledged the quality skills they learned
and could use for life. However, most of these skills are not effectively used by the
youth throughout the project. They are meant to be contextualized by youth and used at
later stages in their lives. The common objective shared by all NGOs working on youth
developmental projects is to equip them with knowledge and skills to make them better
human beings and more employable. However, there is no proper way to know if this
objective was successful or sustainable except through the self-reporting assessments
done during or right after the project ends. Capacity building is not measured in a
scientific way nor in a practical one. Rarely tests are conducted by NGOs to measure
the level of knowledge or skills developed by the beneficiaries.

Moreover, capacity building is required for NGOs staff themselves. To be able
to think strategically, plan activities in a holistic approach, know how proper reporting
and referral should be done, connect better with beneficiaries, develop exit strategies,

learn about the objectives and indicators... staff need proper training. During the discussion with NGOs staff, most of them were not aware of important aspects of the project that directly or indirectly affect their work. Their job seems to be compartmentalized in a way that could harm their work and others because their focus on specific tasks could cause them not to see the bigger picture. The reason is the lack of human resource management especially in smaller local NGOs (Needs, 2009).

4.4. Fourth Main Theme: Development

4.4.1. Personal and Professional Development

Many of the skill building activities offered by NGO programs aim to promote youth's personal and professional development. They are considered crucial indicators NGOs often report on and present to the donors. Most interviewed NGOs staff proudly explained how the various skills provided by their programs empower youth in ways their school and university experiences could not. Regardless of the type of NGO intervention, whether it being related to agriculture, business startup, peacebuilding, community service, employability..., there is always a special part of the program that aims to enhance personal development through design thinking, problem-solving, self-confidence, communication, organization... and professional development through activities that include innovation, emotional intelligence, critical thinking, leadership.... One of the trainers described how youth felt.

Youth find training their heaven or escape, especially rural youth, because their life is full of hardship and abuse. Trainees open up during the sessions and end up showing to all sessions regardless of the many issues they face on a daily basis. One incident I would never forget is when a young girl who lost her mom during the training still showed up to every session while she had to deal with grief, university, and home chores. To her and many others, what they learn in the sessions touches their humanity and gives them hope to have a better livelihood.

Most youth participating in this study highlighted the various skills they learned through the programs and talked about how that transformed their lives on personal and professional levels. Some youth talked about design thinking and how it helped them on a personal level as they can now turn any challenges they face in life into opportunities. They enjoyed it the most as they got to dream big, work in groups, and do unforgettable fun activities. They also learned that a business idea does not only concern them, but it should be human-centered. They learned how to be more compassionate toward others and understand, accept, and support the "different other". Working in diverse groups helped them break down barriers and build new relationships and networks based on respect and acceptance.

4.4.2. Rural Development

When we look at the whole picture starting with identifying the needs of rural youth, centering the projects around their needs, making them part of the program design, taking into consideration different challenges faced by the targeted group and communities in general, focusing on quality training and capacity building rather than quantity, measuring the impact of the interventions years after the project finishes, and sharing the lessons learned so that all new projects can be better designed, only then rural development will be achieved.

NGOs in Lebanon are addressing needs of rural youth. There is no doubt about that based on this study. However, the issue lies in the extent to which NGOs interventions are addressing rural youth needs, their willingness to adapt their programs to accommodate those needs, and their intensions and ability to measure actual impact of the project on rural youth's livelihood and their communities.

Rural development is not sustainable in rural areas in Lebanon given the proliferation of NGOs in the same areas, providing the same services, to the same people with no real impact measured. One of the NGOs representatives talked about he envisions rural development:

> If we aim to achieve rural development, we must first aim to change mindsets, build better communities, impose positive change in the lives of youth and their surroundings. To do all that, it is essential that we understand this cannot be done in one or two short-term interventions. This is a long process of at least 10 years where youth are exposed to different types of trainings and capacity building. We need to invest in our youth, our rural youth, so that they can develop their areas as well as the country. The issue is that different NGOs implement similar interventions in the same areas thus rather than closing the loop by equipping youth with everything they might need, they are duplicating their work for nothing at all.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Research Limitations

There were several limitations for the study that can be summarized in the below points.

1- Short period of time allocated for data collection. Almost 5 weeks were allocated to reach out to NGOs staff and beneficiaries.

2- Rural areas in Lebanon were not identified at the beginning. They depended mainly on NGOs representatives that responded to the invitation. The rural areas are dispersed throughout Lebanon but not in a uniform way. For example, most NGOs interventions are in North Bekaa, South, and Mount Lebanon, with only two NGOs present in North Lebanon and few in other parts of Bekaa.

2- Many of the surveys sent to rural youth were not properly filled and had to be excluded. Also, many of the answers were short and required more explanation to understand the points raised.

3- This study did not include the donors' perspective due to the short time allocated for data collection. This would have contributed significantly to the study.

4- Since all discussions were based on self-reporting incidents, bias is a major factor affecting the results. Given that many of the NGOs staff answers were not backed up by reports, information provided cannot be considered scientific or accurate.

5.2. Recommendations

Following the discussion on the importance of NGOs in Lebanon aligning their agendas to meet rural youth needs, the following recommendations are highlighted:

1- Proper needs assessment must be done prior project proposal. It is crucial for NGOs to understand the actual needs of a community and beneficiaries their intervention is targeting before venturing into a project that might be duplicated, not needed, or proven to be unsuccessful. Proper research should be done to know the targeted area as well as the beneficiaries. It does not have to cost a lot of money, needs assessments could be done as a shared activity among several local NGOs which will not only help them familiarize themselves with challenges but also organize activities among each other, so the work is not duplicated but rather is complementary to others.

2- Adapt the project based on the needs. Once NGOs have started their interventions, they can learn a lot during the pilot and adjust the project according to rural youth needs. It is important that they listen well to the challenges raised by youth at this level since this type of needs assessment at this stage of the project is funded. It is a golden opportunity for NGOs to adapt the projects or align its objectives to meet the needs of rural youth as well as the changes in the socio-economic situation. Moreover, assessments made on a quarterly and yearly basis can help in project redesign if they are conducted and reported properly.

3- To measure the sustainability of the project, it is important to follow up with all beneficiaries after project completion. This means follow up is not done for the sole sake of reporting to donors but also to ensure the project is sustainable even after the intervention had concluded. Follow up needs to include the beneficiaries and the whole society (families, municipalities, and any relevant stakeholder).

4- Better exiting strategies should be developed by NGOs to ensure that they abide by the DO NO HARM principles and allow beneficiaries or community stakeholders to take the lead in activities to ensure sustainability.

5- Better networking among NGOs is required to help one another, avoid facing the same challenges and duplication of work, learn from experiences, allow the beneficiaries to gain from different services, and share their database.

6- Developing better networking opportunities for beneficiaries so they can grow personally and professionally is needed as well as a better referral system which can directly link youth to what they need beyond the scope of the project they participated in.

7- Capacity building is required for NGOs staff to help them realize the full aspects of the project so their work in the field is always related to the objectives and needs, in addition to the technical knowledge and skills. Moreover, capacity building of youth should be regarded as something wholistic and NGOs should aspire to complement their work with other programs/interventions that further develop the skills of the youth.

8- Focus on employment as the main need for rural youth. Add components to the program that can help them secure a job. Some NGOs started to develop apprenticeship programs whereby youth experience on the job training at well-known companies and organizations with the potential of being recruited by one of them. Such a model should be enhanced and developed at a larger scale to benefit all rural youth.

9- Policy makers have a huge role in addressing rural youth challenges by working on proper national youth policies and lobbying along with NGOs for appropriate implementations.

5.3. Conclusion

Youth living in rural areas in developing countries are over 55% (Atchoarena & Gasperini, 2003). Despite them being dependent on the agro-processing industry as the main source for their employment, many governmental agricultural programs and policies in many developing countries do not prioritize youth development (Bennell, 2007). Most states in these countries have failed to address the needs of youth whether them being related to education, capacity building, employment, or health due to their limited resources. The gaps created by the states had to be filled by NGOs. However, despite the many development projects targeting rural youth that NGOs have implemented, they were criticized by many and accused of being failures in addressing rural youth needs.

In Lebanon, NGOs greatly increased in number following the civil war (1990) and as the state got weaker, they got in charge of most service provision (AbouAssi, 2006, 2013). The services provided by NGOs are effective most of the time according to the reports, but the long-term success and sustainability are not measured. The main question raised in this study is: "Are youth development agriculture-related projects implemented by NGOs in Lebanon tailored to the needs of rural youth?" The objective is to give voice to rural youth and highlight their needs for NGOs to take proper actions while planning new development projects.

Throughout the literature review, major debates around NGOs' role as an alternative to that of the state were highlighted. Major studies discussing rural youth needs and how employment is a major challenge they face as well as how NGOs address those needs were emphasized. Long-term success and sustainability are not necessarily taken into consideration when many NGOs design and plan their projects.

The same case is applicable to Lebanon where many other challenges related to NGOs capacity building are faced.

Qualitative research approach was used as the study investigates whether the development projects implemented by NGOs in Lebanon address rural youth needs to promote rural development. It was important to understand the "what", "How", and "Why" aspects so focus group discussions, a survey, and semi-structured interviews were used. The study assumed individual perceptions and opinions about NGOs interventions, their effectiveness, success, and sustainability, and whether they address rural youth needs or not. Twenty semi-structured interviews were conducted with staff that worked for over thirty different NGOs and over fifty development projects in rural areas in Lebanon, as well as 4 FGDs with 35 youth, and a survey filled by 63 youth who benefited from a project.

Thematic analysis was applied where both inductive and deductive approaches were used in data analysis. The major identified themes were youth needs, success, sustainability, and development. The related sub themes were youth needs assessment conducted by NGOs, needs voiced by rural youth, meeting program objectives, meeting rural youth expectations, indicators and success rate, long-lasting impact, capacity building, personal and professional development, and rural development.

Many recommendations were derived based on the study. They were mainly related to the necessity of identifying the needs of rural youth, centering the projects around their needs, making them part of the program design, implementing better policies, taking into consideration different challenges faced by the targeted group and communities in general, focusing on employment and quality training and capacity building, creating networks, measuring the impact of the interventions years after the

project ends, and sharing the lessons learned among NGOs so that all new projects can

be better designed and rural development can be achieved.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

List of Interviewed NGOs Staff

NGO Staff	Intervention Sector	NGO	Location	Age	Gender	Education Level
1	Agriculture, Entrepreneurship, Capacity building, Peacebuilding	A, A1, A2, A3, A4	All over Lebanon	28	Male	High School+ various trainings
2	Agriculture, Entrepreneurship, Capacity building	B, B1, B2	All over Lebanon	35	Male	Master's Degree
3	Entrepreneurship, Capacity building, Vocational training	C, C1	South and Mount Lebanon	31	Male	Bachelor's Degree
4	Agriculture, Entrepreneurship, Capacity building, Vocational training	D, D1	Bekaa	29	Female	Bachelor's Degree
5	Agriculture, Capacity building, Vocational training	F, F1	North Bekaa	26	Female	Bachelor's Degree
6	Agriculture, Farming	G, G1	Akkar, North Bekaa, North Lebanon	38	Male	Bachelor's Degree
7	Agriculture, Entrepreneurship, Capacity building,	H, H2	Bekaa and South Lebanon	27	Female	Master's Degree
8	Agriculture, Entrepreneurship, Capacity building,	I, I2	North Bekaa, Moun Lebanon	26	Male	Bachelor's Degree
9	Agriculture, Entrepreneurship, Capacity building,	J	North Bekaa	33	Female	Master's Degree
10	Agriculture, Farming, Capacity building	K	North Bekaa	24	Female	Bachelor's Degree

11	Agriculture, Entrepreneurship, Capacity building,	L	South Lebanon	28	Male	Bachelor's Degree
12	Entrepreneurship, Capacity building,	M	Mount Lebanon	28	Female	Master's Degree
13	Agriculture, Entrepreneurship, Capacity building, employment	N	Mount Lebanon	28	Female	Bachelor's Degree
14	Employment	O	Mount Lebanon	22	Female	Bachelor's Degree
15	Vocational training and employment	P	Mount Lebanon	31	Male	Master's Degree
16	Agriculture, Capacity building,	Q	North Bekaa	24	Male	Bachelor's Degree
17	Agriculture, Entrepreneurship, Capacity building,	R	North Bekaa	25	Female	Bachelor's Degree
18	Entrepreneurship, Capacity building	S	North Bekaa	27	Female	Bachelor's Degree
19	Agriculture, Entrepreneurship, Capacity building, Vocational training	T	North Bekaa	29	Female	Bachelor's Degree
20	Agriculture, Farming	U	South Lebanon	37	Female	Bachelor's Degree

Appendix 2

Statistics about Youth Participating in the Study

Number of youths	Gender	Age	Nationality	Education Level	Personal Status	Work Status	Financial Status
98 total	60% Females 40% Males	18-29	81.5% Lebanese	12.6% Middle School	77% single	82.65% Unemployed	11.6% 1: Very bad (in dept)

			18.5% non-Lebanese	16.7% High School 4.2% Diploma (Vocational) 50.1% University Degree 16.3% Master's Degree	19% Married 4% Prefer not to answer	14.15% Employed 3.2% Prefer not to answer 81% Part-time Job 19%Full-time job	57.85% 2: Bad 26.75% 3: Average 3.8% 4: Good 0% 5: Very Good (have savings)
35 participated in the FGD	57% Females 43% Males	18-29	86% Lebanese 14% non-Lebanese	3% Middle School 9% High School 0% Diploma (Vocational) 80% University Degree 8% Master's Degree	90% single 10% Married	91% Unemployed 9% Employed 0% Prefer not to answer 80% Part-time Job 20% Full-time job	9% 1: Very bad (in dept) 54% 2: Bad 29% 3: Average 8% 4: Good 0% 5: Very Good (have savings)
63 filled the survey	62% Females 38% Males	18-29	79% Lebanese 21% non-Lebanese	18% Middle School 21% High School 6.5% Diploma (Vocational) 33.5% University Degree 21%	70% single 24% Married 6% Prefer not to answer	78% Unemployed 17% Employed 5% Prefer not to answer 82% Part-time Job	13% 1: Very bad (in dept) 60% 2: Bad 25.5% 3: Average

				Master's Degree		18% Full-time job	1.5% 4: Good 0% 5: Very Good (have savings)

Email Invitations

1- Email to be sent directly to NGOs representatives:

Title: Invitation to participate in a research study
Invitation to Participate in a Research Study
This notice is for an AUB-IRB Approved Research Study
for Dr. Ali Chalak at AUB.

ac22@aub.edu.lb
It is not an Official Message from AUB or from UNDP
If you wish to opt out of the mailing list, kindly inform me

Dear X,

I hope my email finds you well.

I am inviting you to participate in a research study entitled "Local NGOs: Attending to the needs of rural youth or implementing ready-made projects?" This study aims to investigate whether the projects implemented by NGOs in Lebanon target the needs of rural youth and how their agendas should align with those needs to promote agriculture development.

You are kindly asked to participate in an interview to give your opinion as an NGO representative about the project design, implementation, and assessment. Please select here the date/time that best suits you. The duration of the interview is about 45 minutes.

> The research is conducted online and is hosted on AUB server. Please read the attached consent form and consider whether you want to be involved in the study. If you have any questions about this study, you may contact the investigator/research team (Dr. Ali Chalak; ac22@aub.edu.lb or Hikmat Al Khansa; hja18@mail.aub.edu).

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2- Email to be sent to youth (project beneficiaries) through a program officer:

Title: Invitation to participate in a research study- Short Survey or Focus Group Discussion

It is not an Official Message from AUB or UNDP
If you wish to opt out of the mailing list, kindly inform me*

Dear X,

I hope my email finds you well.
I would appreciate it if you can forward this email to as many beneficiaries as possible who are residing in rural areas, aged between 18 and 29 years old, and who have already benefited from a service or completed an activity provided by your NGO.
………

Invitation to Participate in a Research Study
This notice is for an AUB-IRB Approved Research Study
for Dr. Ali Chalak at AUB.

ac22@aub.edu.lb
It is not an Official Message from AUB or UNDP

I am inviting you to participate in a research study entitled "Local NGOs: Attending to the needs of rural youth or implementing ready-made projects?" This study aims to investigate whether the projects implemented by NGOs in Lebanon target the needs of rural youth and how their agendas should align with those needs to promote agriculture development.
You are kindly asked to participate in a short survey or a focus group discussion to give your opinion as project beneficiary about the project design, implementation, and assessment. If you are interested in participating in the focus group discussion, kindly fill the Limesurvey with your preferred date/time. The duration of the focus group discussion is 1 hour. In case you would like to fill out a survey instead, kindly use this link. The duration for completing the survey is about 10-15 minutes.

The resreach is done online and is hosted on AUB server.
Please read the attached consent form and consider whether you want to be involved in the study.
If you have any questions about this study, (Dr. Ali Chalak; ac22@aub.edu.lb or Hikmat Al Khansa; hja18@mail.aub.edu).

Click here to register for the focus group discussion:
https://survey.aub.edu.lb/index.php/111582?lang=ar

Click here to fill out the survey: https://survey.aub.edu.lb/index.php/798832?lang=ar

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A. Interview Questions (NGO Representatives):

1- Tell me about the development project(s) you previously or currently work on which specifically target rural youth (nature of the project, objectives, geographical area, funding…)
2- Did you or someone else perform a needs assessment prior project planning?
3- What were the main needs the project(s) addresses?
4- Tell me about the project planning and approach adopted.
5- Were there any stakeholders involved? If yes, who and how?
6- How did/do you assess the impact of the project(s)?
7- How successful and sustainable you believe the project(s) is? Please explain.
8- What would you change (at any level) in the project to make it more impactful? Please explain.

B. Survey and Focus Group Discussions Questions:
The Survey (In Arabic) can be found at this link:
https://survey.aub.edu.lb/index.php/798832?lang=ar
The Focus Group Discussion registration link can be found at this link:
https://survey.aub.edu.lb/index.php/111582?lang=ar

1- Age
2- Gender
3- Nationality
4- Education level
5- Personal Status
6- Work Status
7- Occupation
8- Residential area
9- How would you describe your economic status (1-5: In dept to very good (I have savings))
10- Do you have dependents you need to support financially?
11- If yes, how many?
12- Please describe your current challenges related to your livelihood.
13- What are your needs to secure a better livelihood or improve your economic status.
14- Name the project (and NGO) you participated in as a beneficiary
15- Describe the project's objectives
16- Were you involved in the project planning in terms of needs assessment before the project launched?
17- Why did you join the project and what did you expect from it in terms of skills, knowledge or other benefits?
18- Were the objectives related to your needs?
19- If yes, how close are the project's objectives to your needs (1 to 5)
20- How impactful do you think this project is in terms of what you learned? (1-5)
21- Will you be able to use what you learned during the project in your daily life? If yes, how?
22- Will the project help you make a better living? If yes, how?
23- If you were to change anything in the project, what would it be?
24- Would you like to be part of all program aspects starting from program design to post-implementation? Why or why not?

Interview/FGD Consent Form
Local NGOs: Attending to the needs of rural youth or implementing ready-made projects?
Principal Investigator: Ali Chalak, Ph.D.
Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences
American University of Beirut

This is not an official document from AUB or UNDP

My name is Hikmat Al Khansa. I am a researcher student at the Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences at the American University of Beirut. I am here to conduct a study that will look at whether local NGOs in Lebanon implement projects tailored to the needs of rural youth or not.

Before we begin, I would like to take a minute to explain why I am inviting you to participate and what I will be doing with the information you provide to me. Please stop me at any time if you have any questions. After I have told you a bit more about my research, you can decide whether or not you would like to participate.

I am doing this study as part of my research in the Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences at the American University of Beirut. I will be interviewing a sample of 20 NGOs representatives (and conducting a FGD with 15-20 youth who participated in a project implemented by an NGO in Lebanon) about their perception on how NGOs implement project in Lebanon and whether they are tailored to the needs to rural youth or not. This collected information will be used in published research as well as in academic presentations. I will also share this data with the principal investigator at the American University of Beirut.

Participation in the interview should take about 45 minutes (1 hour for the FGD). Participation is on a purely voluntary basis. I will interview you (conduct the FGD) while having my video camera on all the time but you are free to turn off your video camera. If you do not wish to answer any particular question in the interview, you may skip the question by saying "skip" during the interview/FGD. All data collected are treated as confidential information. Your name or any identifiers are not included in my research analysis without your explicit permission. All data shared with other investigators are aggregated data and have no identifiers that could be linked to your personal responses. All completed interviews and FGDs are kept in locked files on a password-protected computer. Three years after the end of the research study, the taped interviews will be destroyed. I will keep aggregated research data on my computer files for future use in other NGO related research studies. If at any time and for any reason, you would prefer not to answer any questions, please feel free not to.

If at any time you would like to stop participating, please tell me. We can take a break, stop and continue at a later date, or stop altogether. You will not be penalized in any way for deciding to stop participation at any time.

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There is no monetary compensation for your time if you complete the interview/FGD.

I would like to audiotape record this interview/FGD so as to make sure that I remember accurately all the information you provide. I will keep these tapes on my password-protected computer. They will only be used by me. The tapes will not be shared with my collaborators. Only the aggregated data from the interviews/FGDs (which will have no identifiers) will be shared. You may still participate in the interview/FGD if you do not want to be taped. If you do not consent to be recorded in the interview/FGD, I will be taking notes instead.

If you have questions, you are free to ask them now. If you have questions later, you may contact me: Hikmat Al Khansa, Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences, American University of Beirut, telephone: 70012968 or email hja18@mail.aub.edu or contact the Principal Investigator: Ali Chalak, Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences, American University of Beirut, email: ac22@aub.edu.lb.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, you can contact the AUB IRB Office:
Address: American University of Beirut, Bliss Street, Hamra, Beirut / phone number: 00961 - 1 - 350000 or 1 374374, Ext: 5445 / email: irb@aub.edu.lb

Do you voluntarily consent to take part of the study?

Consent to Record Interview/FGD (Question should be posed at the start of the recording)

Do you also voluntarily consent to this interview/FGD being recorded?

Consent to Quote from Interview/FGD
I may wish to quote from this interview/FGD either in the presentations or articles resulting from this work. A made-up name will be used in order to protect your identity, unless you specifically request that you be identified by your true name.

Do you agree to allow me to quote from this interview/FGD?

Consent to Use Name
There are a number of reasons for which you may prefer that your true name be used in presentations and articles related to this research. This choice is entirely voluntary. Your participation in the research study does not require the use of your name.

Would you like your true name to be used in any oral presentations or written documents resulting from this research?

[If you agree to have your name used, please sign below to confirm your choices:

Consent for participation: _____
Consent for taping of interview/FGD: _____
Consent for quoting from interview/FGD: _____

If you chose to be interviewed/part of the FGD and have your name used, you will be given a copy of this consent form with your signatures.]

Confirmation of Consent to Record Interview/FGD
(Question will be posed once recording has begun).
Do you voluntarily consent to this interview/FGD being recorded?

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Consent to participate in an Online Research Study

This notice is for an AUB-IRB Approved Research Study
for Dr. Ali Chalak at AUB.
It is not an Official Message from AUB or from UNDP

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled Local NGOs: Attending to the needs of
rural youth or implementing ready-made projects? conducted by Dr Ali Chalak, Faculty of
Agriculture and Food Sciences at the American University of Beirut. The conduct of this study
will adhere to the IRB approved protocol.

The IRB approved method for approaching subjects is the Social and Behavioral Sciences
Expedited review. The purpose of the study is to collect information on experiences and
perceptions related to development projects implemented by local NGOs in Lebanon.

PROCEDURES

This message invites you to:

Read the consent document and consider whether you want to be involved in the study.

And to note:

- Participation is completely voluntary.
- Completing the survey will take around 10 minutes.
- Only the data you provide in the questionnaire will be collected and analyzed. The
  research team will not have access to your name or contact details.
- The results of the survey will be published in a thesis available in printed from and
  electronically from AUB Libraries.
- The inclusion criteria: You are eligible to participate in this questionnaire if you are or
  above 18 years of age and have participated in one or more development projects
  implemented by local NGOs in Lebanon.
- The exclusion criteria: You cannot fill out this survey if you have not participated in any
  development project implemented by an NGO.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

You will not receive payment for participation in this study.

The results of the study will help raise the voice of rural youth in Lebanon as they describe their
needs for a better living and so encourages NGOs to investigate those needs when planning for
new development projects in Lebanon.

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POTENTIAL RISKS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR SOCIETY

The risks of the study are minimal./You may experience distress or embarrassment when answering some of the questions.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The collected data will remain confidential and anonymous.

Records will be monitored and may be audited by the IRB while assuring confidentiality.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

If you voluntarily consent to take part in this study, you can change your mind and withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

Refusal to participate or withdrawal from the study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled, and neither will it affect their relationship with their organization and AUB/AUBMC.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY

If you have any questions about the study, can contact the research team at
 1- Dr. Ali Chalak; ac22@aub.edu.lb
 2- Hikmat Al Khansa; hja18@mail.aub.edu; 70012968

ACCESS TO THE SURVEY

If after reading the consent document and having you questions answered, you voluntarily agree to take part in the study; you can access the survey by clicking on the following link.

CONCERNS OR QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS

If you have concerns about the study or questions about your rights as a participant, you can contact the AUB IRB Office:
 address: American University of Beirut, Bliss Street, Hamra, Beirut / phone number: 00961 - 1 - 350000 or 1 374374, Ext: 5445 / email: irb@aub.edu.lb

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