

How can Civil Society Organisations Become More Sustainable?

A booklet of solutions from the Tabadol Programme.





1. Introduction

The Tabadol programme is a one-of-a-kind programme designed for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to develop creative solutions in partnership with entrepreneurs to support CSOs sustain the transformational change they are leading in their communities (Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine and Syria).

Tabadol is an Arabic word that literally translates into exchange, hence why the programme aims to:

- To encourage the use of entrepreneurship and innovation frameworks and tools within CSOs.
- To have social entrepreneurs access knowledge, know-how and clients in their quest to develop solutions to social problems.
- To develop solutions that will sustain civil societies' operations, programmes and impact. All while being environmentally conscious.

What

The Tabadol programme is launched by The Asfari Foundation in partnership with Makesense Lebanon. The Asfari Foundation is a grant making family foundation based in the UK that supports local Civil Society Organisations working in and for the Levant region to strengthen their impact, innovation, sustainability, and robustness through a number of services. Makesense designs impact programmes and spark collaborations between engaged citizens, social entrepreneurs and forward-thinking organisations to collectively tackle the social and environmental issues of today. Eedama is a consultancy that promotes sustainable behavior.

Why

Practically speaking, the Tabadol programme matches entrepreneurs with CSOs to develop new solutions that advances the organisation's sustainability. In 2022, 10 entrepreneurs were matched with 10 CSOs across the 4 countries in the Levant region, and exchanged skills and knowledge over a period of 6 months that concluded in the creation of 10 solutions (1 solution for each CSO) as elaborated later in this booklet.

How

The programme came from the foundation's understanding that funding is not as available as it has been in the past and CSOs are increasingly required to think innovatively about sustainable business models.



II. Why is the focus on sustainability? What is sustainability?

Different meanings for sustainability:

Sustaining means keeping or reserving, but this could mean so many things.



It could mean keeping our environment intact for future generations.



Or ensuring that our financial resources are stable.



It could also mean maintaining the status quo.



Keeping business-as-usual.

Sustainability under this discourse is focused on three interconnected directions: environmental integrity, social equality, human wellbeing.

It has different sets of indicators and goals on the global and local levels. Managing the sustainability transition requires the work of many actors, and the introduction of innovative solutions.

d. Reducing its carbon footprint and achieving better environmental and social standards.

But when we say sustainability for the Tabadol programme, it encompasses sustainable operations, sustainable programmemes, sustainable impact, and environmental sustainability.

A sustainable organisation can be defined by two main criteria:

1. The sustainability of its offering

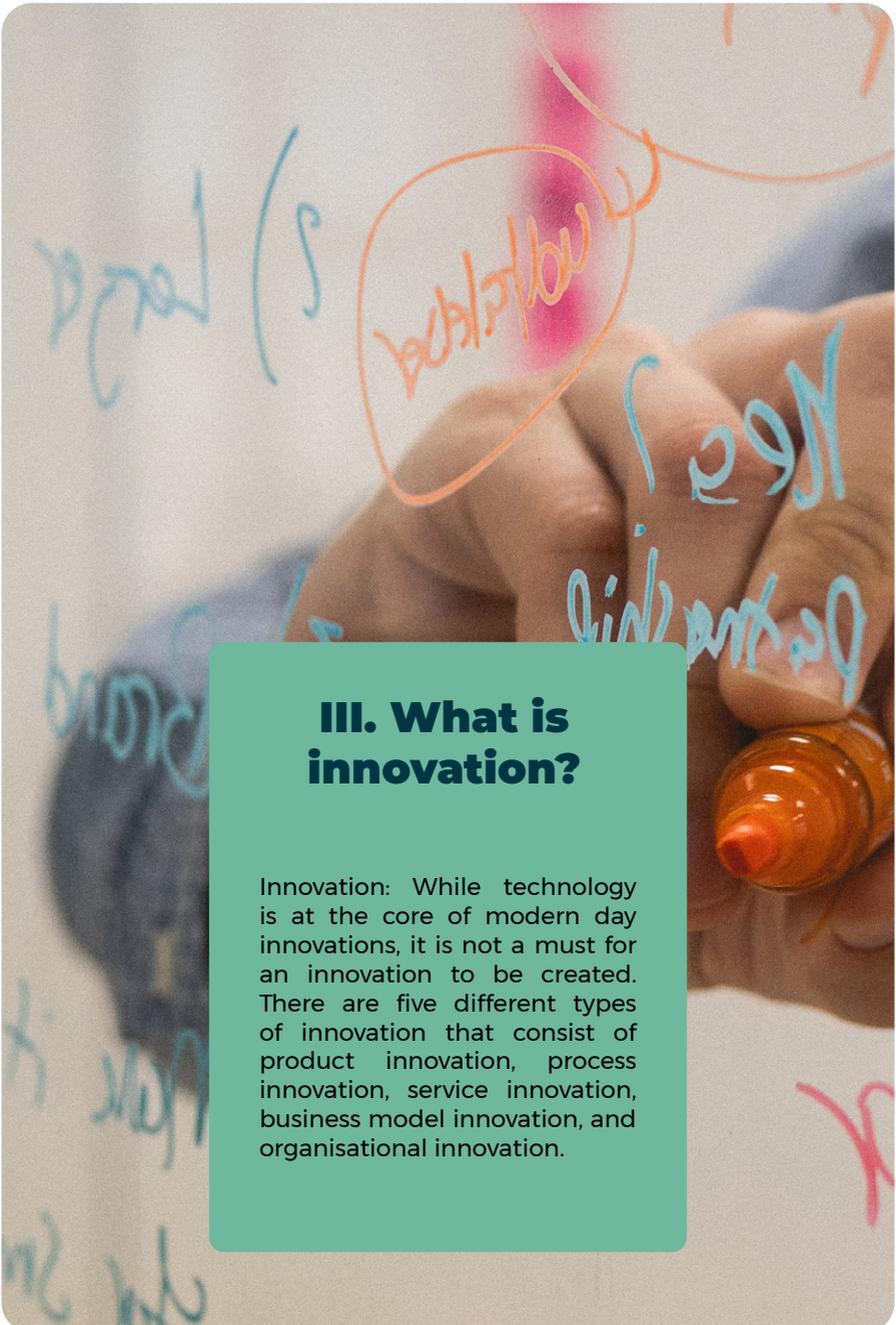
- The degree to which the organisation is delivering transformative outcomes and creating change in the target communities
- The involvement of local communities or end users and the process of designing, developing, and delivering solutions also forms part of a sustainable offering.
- Finally, the carbon footprint of the operations and any environmental impacts account towards a sustainable offering.

2. And the organisational and financial sustainability of the organisation itself.

- These include the ability of the organisation to maintain its funding sources and revenue streams
- Its ability to continuously attract and retain talent
- And its capacity to develop its processes, channels, and offering

There are four pillars of sustainability:

- Sustaining operations through resource sharing with our organisations to reduce overhead costs. Or through long term funding. Or through outsourcing the expertise of your team to generate income.
- Sustainable programmemes through working in collaboration with partners, through income generating activities, through sponsorship from the private sector, or through pro bono services.
- Sustaining impact through the utilisation of giving it forward schemes or utilisation of technology (i.e. platforms, apps) to continuously support people with limited costs.
- Environmental sustainability through making your programmemes and operations eco friendly, utilising efficient lighting in the office, reducing use of cars, papers, plastic waste, or using recycled materials.



III. What is innovation?

Innovation: While technology is at the core of modern day innovations, it is not a must for an innovation to be created. There are five different types of innovation that consist of product innovation, process innovation, service innovation, business model innovation, and organisational innovation.



IV. Why are sustainability and innovation interrelated?

Many organisations struggle to be sustainable, whereas they have been trying to use the tools that are available and that they are aware of. Given the continuous evolution in the global (world) and local (Middle East) situations, new ideas and solutions are needed in order to find sustainability, be it in terms of operations, impact or financials. Hence how innovation interrelates to sustainability.

➤ **For more information:**
tababol.makesense.org

V. Solutions created in 2022

Solution #1 - Powering Education Through Video Games

CSO: MMKN: MMKN uses education and community, in all their facets, from volunteering, to academics, skill training, to psychosocial and group activities, to build the resilience of the youth and women of today to improve the society of tomorrow in the most sustainable approach possible.

The **integration of gamification** into conventional educational programmes **democratises the access to education** for all communities. Although costly to introduce, the **return on investment** of all gamification solutions can be achieved in a relatively short period of time for their ease of **replicability** and **scalability**. The organisation can leverage technology to enhance the quality and impact of its programmes, reaching a wider audience and **improving the efficiency and effectiveness** of its services.

Fellow: Mike Harb

Impact: 20% student grades increase

Problem and Target Audience:

Conventional education means for youth

Solution:

Creating and testing 2 3D-games

Description:

Engaging with youth in Lebanon to create gamified education programmes in public schools and marginalised communities.



Solution #2 - Linking Drama Therapy and Entrepreneurship

CSO: Yes Theatre: Yes Theatre works to motivate, develop and promote local potentials in an innovative and creative way through artistic performances, drama workshops, capacity building and cultural exchange activities, projects and programmes.

Problem and Target Audience:

Insufficiency of therapeutic art for communities in the Arab region

Solution:

Creating two programmes

Description:

Community empowerment fostering innovation through art therapy, creating a scalable model across the Arab region.

By introducing an entrepreneurship curriculum for drama therapists, Yes Theater has **leveraged their own community**, developing local resources to ensure **diversification** of their services **portfolio**. Moreover, the **optimisation of the use of the virtual space** has enabled the organisation to **broaden their reach**, and target new arabic-speaking participants across the region. By sharing its expertise and knowledge with other organisations and communities, the organisation can **promote the adoption of best practices and build a network of partners and supporters**.

Fellow: Sabine El Zein

Impact: 10+ workshops delivered and 40+ participants attended



Solution #3 - Empowering the Visually Impaired Through Fair Education

CSO: DPNA: To empower, mobilise, and enable citizens to change and meet the needs of the communities, as individuals and/or groups, specifically the marginalised communities in rural, bordered, and poverty areas, through human rights-based approach.

Problem and Target Audience:

Access of visually impaired people to educational material.

Solution:

Recording 23 audiobooks

Description:

New programme to support visually impaired people in Saida (Lebanon), offering equal educational opportunities in schools.

By creating a volunteering network, the organisation was able to mobilise additional human resources to support in the development of a new activity. Relying on individuals that align with the organisation's values and mission can prove to be impactful as well as financially beneficial.

Fellow: Nour AlAjlouni

Impact: 20+ visually impaired students supported and 10+ volunteers mobilised



Solution #4 - VR for Inclusion and Accessibility

CSO: AINayzak: To develop scientific, entrepreneurship, engineering and technological (STEEM) competencies of Palestinian youth and to provide promising socio-economic opportunities, through initiating, design and implementation of specialised programmes that create inspiring and motivating environments for incubation and excellence.

The **use of technology** in general can contribute to the sustainability of an organisation's activities by **improving efficiency, reducing costs** in the long term, minimising physical re-iteration of testing models and resource consumption, and **enhancing stakeholder engagement and satisfaction.**

Fellow: Emma Sleiman

Impact: 2 schools targeted with a focus on speech impairment

Problem and Target

Audience:

Insufficient means for disabled students to integrate in schools

Solution:

Building 1 prototype

Description:

VR technology to help disabled reintegrate in school

Solution #5 - Contextualising Sexual Harassment Awareness

CSO: Teach for Lebanon: To provide less privileged children with quality education by recruiting, training and placing young leaders into the classrooms for two years to equip children with lifelong learning skills. These young leaders continue their long-term impact as effective alumni.

Building an online platform to focus on an organisation's cause can contribute to ensuring its sustainability by **raising awareness** and driving more traction onto their online presence, **creating a network of supporters** and potentially funders of such initiatives, and ensuring the longevity of the organisation's efforts.

Fellow: Reem Daher

Impact: 126 hotline calls and 1 programme designed funded by the US Embassy

Problem and Target Audience:

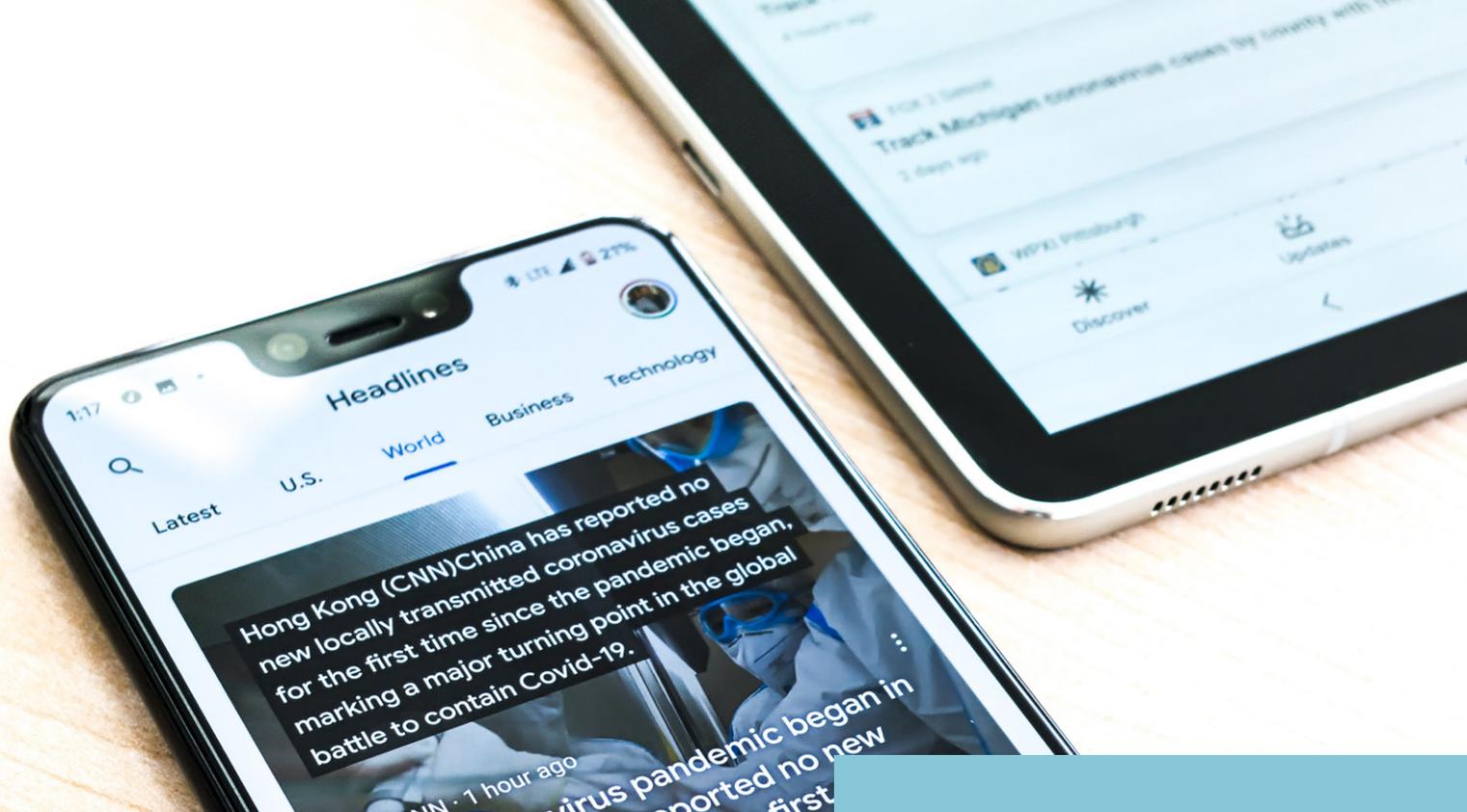
Sexual harassment in sensitive communities

Solution:

Creating sexual harassment awareness content in the needed and proper context

Description:

Building an online platform, hosting podcasts, awareness content, and a hotline for sexual harassment cases in Tripoli.



Solution #6 - Reaching wider audiences through new media

CSO: Beirut Today: Beirut Today is an independent and free news platform based in Lebanon that advocates for human rights and provides a safe platform for a community of young journalists, students, scholars, and activists to produce in-depth critical articles and audiovisual reports.

Problem and Target

Audience:

Insufficiency of Arabic media content

Solution:

Writing 45 media pieces in Arabic

Description:

Develop and spread Arabic content across the MENA region, reporting on cultural issues

Developing new content can contribute to the sustainability of a media outlet by **reaching a wider audience** including Arabic-speaking communities and individuals who prefer to consume content in Arabic, and therefore meeting the needs of the targeted readers. **Fostering cultural exchange** can contribute to building bridges between cultures, which can have positive impacts on the organisation's reputation and network, and reduce its reliance on traditional sources of revenue, such as advertising and subscriptions. By developing new content formats, the outlet can **diversify revenue streams** and optimise its reliance on sources, such as advertising and subscriptions.

Fellow: Wael Kays

Impact: 20% increase in website traffic and 3K+ articles viewership



Solution #7 - Supporting talent in underprivileged communities

CSO: Subul: Subul Impact is an outsourcing agency that represents a mission to establish balance, stability, and social consciousness.

Problem and Target Audience:

Talent in underprivileged communities is in the shade.

Solution:

Launching 1 outsourcing platform

Description:

Utilising technology to provide freelancing opportunities to the Syrian diaspora, as well as building Subul's very own internship programme

By **fostering innovation and utilising technology** to provide freelancing opportunities to the Syrian diaspora and building Subul's very own internship programme can ensure the sustainability of the organisation by **diversifying income streams** beyond traditional donor funding and **building a talent pipeline** of skilled professionals who can contribute to the organisation's mission and work. In addition, the organisation can **enhance its structural capacity** and expand its reach, and therefore better **respond to the needs of its beneficiaries and stakeholders**, and ultimately increase its sustainability of impact.

Fellow: Eslam Abo El Hawa

Impact: 5 interns integrated and 10+ upskilling workshops



Solution #8 - Improving the Waste Management Value Chain

CSO: BuildPalestine: BuildPalestine, supports the inspiring and growing social innovation sector in Palestine by connecting individuals looking to support innovative projects with those making an impact within their communities.

Problem and Target

Audience:

Insufficient waste management value chain

Solution:

Launching 1 online platform

Description:

Reinforcing the supply chain between the innovative waste management solutions in Palestine.

By launching an Etsy online store to sell products made from recycled materials, the organisation is diversifying its revenue streams beyond its primary source of income. The online store can save significant overhead costs, such as rent and utilities, allowing it to allocate more resources towards other aspects of the business. The organisation's new Etsy presence can help reach a wider audience than it might be able to through its own website, with increased number of sales, which in turn can help ensure the organisation's financial sustainability. Finally, Etsy also provides an opportunity for an organisation to connect with other sellers in the same industry, and potentially collaborate on future projects.

Fellow: Rawan Rajab

Impact: 10 waste collection points designated and 2 tons of waste collected

Solution #9 - Empowering School Students Through the Design Industry

CSO: INJAZ Lebanon: INJAZ Lebanon aims to educate and prepare Lebanon's youth to become qualified and successful employees and entrepreneurs in a growing regional and global economy.



Hackathons and innovation camps can be a valuable tool for organisations looking to foster innovation, collaboration, and continuous improvement. By leveraging the creativity and knowledge of their stakeholders, organisations can develop new ideas and solutions in different thematic areas that can contribute to their long-term sustainability.

Fellow: Osama Khalil

Impact: 3 creative skills introduced and 1 school targeted

Problem and Target Audience:

Empowering school students through the design industry

Solution:

Designing 2 bootcamps

Description:

Integrate hackathons that could be part of innovative camps, targeting new sectors, reaching more youth and building more inclusive communities



Solution #10 - Advocating for Displaced Syrians' Property Rights

CSO: Syrians for Truth and Justice: STJ documents human rights violations perpetrated against Syrians and in Syria and works towards justice and change.

Problem and Target

Audience:

Displaced Syrians' property rights are violated, and the violations are undocumented and need more spotlight.

Solution:

Developing a platform called Beiti

Description:

Highlighting displaced Syrians' experiences with housing, land and property violations, by organising advocacy activities, curating, and editing.

Developing a platform called Beiti, where Displaced Syrians can upload and document their official documents in a safe and secure place. The platform also has a toolkit on HLP rights to raise the public awareness, as well as videos in Arabic, English and Kurdish.

Advocacy activities, curating, and editing on human rights violations can play a critical role in promoting sustainable solutions to these challenging issues, while also enhancing the sustainability of the organisations working to address them. Sharing human rights violations stories can lead to increased support for efforts to address these violations as organisations build a stronger evidence base to support their advocacy and programmatic efforts. By demonstrating expertise and impact, organisations can attract new funding and support, as well as build stronger collaborative relationships with partners, such as international agencies, local authorities or communities.

Fellow: Haneen Ali

Impact: 40 testimonies collected, and 4 regions covered

VI. Testimonies

CSOs:



"MMKN's participation in the makesense Tabadol programmes accelerated our innovation capacity, through the right EdTech match, creathon competition and workshops. The programme offered us a great opportunity to develop a new sustainable initiative that strengthen students' education experience and keeps them in school."

Omar Habib, Associate Director
(Education, Marketing & Operations),

MMKN NGO, Lebanon



"The fellowship opportunity through Tabadol has helped AlNayzak to fulfil its mission by supporting disabled children and youth through integrating VR Technology in disabilities diagnosis and treatment. Our work within the Tabadol programme contributes to the advancement of the incubated project prototype, which was introduced and tested for the first time in Palestine by AlNayzak."

**Aref Hussein, chairman of Al
Nayzak, Palestine**



"We feel we succeeded. We are proud, we invested in her [the fellow] and she will achieve an impact."

Mohamad, Yes Theatre, Palestine

VI. Testimonies

Fellows:



"The edge of this programme is that entrepreneurs get the credibility and the network needed."

Mike Harb, Tabadol fellow,



"Tabadol was the springboard for me to access a lot of new opportunities, making me more dedicated to my project. I really recommend this programme because it was very unique and practical, unlike many other theoretical programmes."

Reem Daher, Tabadol fellow, Lebanon



"The programme helped me become more agile, and gave me a better understanding of social media platforms and how to engage with the audience. I was also better exposed to the current practices in the media industry."

Wael Kays, Tabadol fellow, Syria



"The programme was a wonderful opportunity to access new learning materials thanks to the Tabadol coaching sessions, as well as being able to connect and work with BuildPalestine."

Rawan Rajab, Tabadol fellow, Palestine



"I was always looking for an opportunity to collaborate with people outside my country; Tabadol helped me work with people who hold different perspectives, and made me realise my goals."

Osama Khalil, Tabadol fellow, Jordan



"This fellowship helped me apply my knowledge in practice. For example, What I have been studying in Sustainability, I managed to plan it and apply it as business practices."

Nour Al Ajlouni, Tabadol fellow, Jordan



"Tabadol gave me the opportunity to practise my leadership and entrepreneurship skills, improve them, and also develop new ones that would pave my way towards a better future for me and for the people around me. "

Eslam Abo El Hawa, Tabadol fellow, Syria

Tabadol تبادل



مؤسسة الأصفري
The Asfari Foundation



make sense

