

Inspiring Journeys in the MENA Region

Interview with a Local Civil Society Organization in Lebanon

Point Talake initiative

Behind every successful initiative lies an inspiring story: one that blends vision, perseverance, and the drive to make a real impact. Valentine Nesser, Founder and CEO of the Point Talake initiative in Lebanon, has one such story. With over eight years of experience in civil society work, Valentine has played a pivotal role in fostering community collaboration and supporting initiatives that create meaningful and lasting change.

Context

In August 2025, Valentine shared her journey, the challenges she faced, and the valuable lessons she learned along the way, offering a roadmap and a source of inspiration for anyone seeking to make a difference with insights that can inspire those striving to bring positive change to their communities.

From Inspiration to Action

In southern Lebanon, a region marked by war and insecurity, a women-led initiative spearheaded by Valentine broke the silence surrounding a topic often considered secondary in conflict settings: sexual and reproductive health for displaced women from border villages. Over two years, Valentine and her team successfully managed a project that became a model of resilience and determination despite all the challenges.



“What made it unique is that it addressed a sensitive and urgent issue within a community that often refuses to deal with it as a necessity. We worked in a challenging environment where this topic was usually deprioritized, but we saw it as a fundamental human need and that conviction is what drove us to success.”

The inspiration behind the project came directly from everyday reality.

“As an initiative from southern Lebanon, the issues of this region, particularly those affecting women, matter deeply to us. What inspired us most was living amid conflict; it pushed us to provide this support and awareness at a very critical time. What kept us motivated was realizing that it's purely a humanitarian issue that wasn't getting enough attention. That sense of responsibility kept us committed until the end.”

For Valentine and her team, the project was not just an activity or training; it was a humanitarian mission reflecting true value.

The Power of Partnerships

Valentine emphasized that collaboration was a cornerstone of success. The initiative worked with five local organizations in southern Lebanon on youth conflict resolution issues and launched a joint media campaign across social media platforms that reached over 40,000 young people and directly benefited more than 600 individuals. This demonstrated how partnerships can multiply positive impact.

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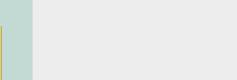
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Facing Challenges and Crafting Solutions

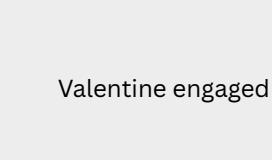
The ongoing threat of insecurity was a major challenge that constantly endangered the project's continuity, but adaptability was their strongest weapon.



“We had to find a way to deliver knowledge without putting the participants or our team at risk. So, we decided to move the workshops online. It wasn't just an alternative it proved highly effective, allowing us to reach even more participants, especially those unable to attend in person.”

Valentine also recognized the importance of focusing on the team's well-being, not just that of the beneficiaries, through an innovative step.

“We organized psychological support workshops for the team. This unconventional step proved incredibly effective in strengthening our resilience and keeping us motivated to continue the work.”



Project Management Practice

The selection of team members was based on their belief in the cause.

“We made sure to choose people who had a deep belief in the importance of our work; that inner conviction became a powerful motivator.”

Valentine engaged in continuous communication to keep her team motivated and committed throughout the project.

“We created space for daily dialogue, allowing team members to freely express their opinions and concerns and to work together on solutions.”

To encourage creativity within the team, she adopted a policy she called the 'safe space for ideas':

“I encouraged everyone to share any idea, no matter how strange it sounded, without fear of rejection or criticism. Then we worked together to develop it into something implementable.”

Valentine also believes that psychological support is an essential part of effective leadership.

“ We organized mental health workshops for the team to help them cope with pressure, which strengthened their sense of care and support. **”**

Inclusion and Community Impact

Ensuring the project's inclusivity and responsiveness began with listening to community needs.



“ The project was born from a genuine need, not an external idea. We made sure the workshops were in simple, local language, using real-life examples from participants' experiences, and we included people of different ages and backgrounds to ensure everyone benefited. **”**

The project's reach soon exceeded expectations.

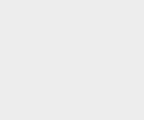
“ One positive surprise was the growing demand for workshops from women in villages that were not originally targeted. They heard about the project from other participants and this showed how urgent the need for such programs was. **”**

However, the team also faced emotional challenges along the way.

“ One negative outcome was the psychological toll the security situation had on participants, which forced us to adjust our plan and offer additional mental health support that hadn't been initially planned. **”**

For Valentine, measuring success and ensuring sustainability went beyond the number of beneficiaries.

“ We follow up with participants after the workshops to see how they apply what they learned in their daily lives. We also work to build their capacities to become community activists themselves, ensuring the project's impact continues across generations. **”**



Lessons Learned and Advice

Looking back, Valentine reflected on the most important lesson learned:

“ The biggest lesson is that flexibility is the key to success in unstable environments. We must be ready to change our plans quickly when circumstances shift. Sometimes innovative solutions are the lifeline of our projects. **”**

She also shared what they would have done differently:

“ I would have allocated more time and budget for mental health support from the very beginning for both the team and the participants. We didn't anticipate the significant psychological impact of the security situation, and we could have been better prepared. **”**

In conclusion, Valentine offered **three key pieces of advice** for other organizations bringing positive changes to their communities:



Be flexible and creative

Don't limit yourself to traditional plans or rigid strategies. Stay open to fresh ideas, experiment with new approaches, and look for innovative solutions that match your changing reality. Adaptability allows you to navigate uncertainty with confidence and turn challenges into opportunities.



Invest in your team

Your team is your greatest asset, and their growth fuels the success of your mission. Provide them with support, guidance, and the freedom to explore their ideas. When people feel valued and trusted, they develop the resilience, motivation, and commitment needed to overcome obstacles and deliver meaningful results.



Focus on real impact

Success isn't defined solely by numbers or short-term metrics. What truly matters is the lasting difference you create in people's lives and your capacity to drive sustainable, positive change. Keep your attention on outcomes that strengthen communities, inspire progress, and build a foundation for long-term improvement.



“ The real value wasn't in the number of workshops; it was in opening the door for dialogue on a deeply human issue and creating lasting change. This experience proved that when community work stems from genuine need, it can make a real difference even in the most challenging environments. **”**