FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES,

The guidebook you are reading is the fruit of an amazing initiative led by the protection team at Basmeh & Zeitooneh. The dedication of our colleagues Nour Beydoun and Nibal Al Alo, and their keenness to take an extra step with the women they serve, has resulted in a workshop where women were able to express their inner struggles through art, and feel accomplished and maybe liberated.

The idea for this project came from the participants, when they were looking for ways to document the resilience it takes to cope with displacement. The participants favoured arts over writing as a means of expression because it allows participants with various degrees of literacy to participate.

The project would not have been possible without the financial and technical support of our partners Trócaire and Irish Aid, who funded the sessions and research on the impact of the project on the psychosocial well-being of the participants, as well as that of the social workers who moderated the sessions and offered psycho-social support to the participants for the last two years.

In this guidebook we detailed the process and lessons learned throughout the project. We hope it inspires professionals who work in similar settings to support communities through expressive art.

I would like to thank the participants for their trust and commitment, and Nour Beydoun, Nibal Al Alo, Rola Soheil, Leonie Harsh, and Fiona Shanahan for embracing the participants’ initiative and successfully implementing and documenting the project.

Fadi Halliso / Co-founder and CEO

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The development of this guidebook was led by Nour Beydoun, Protection Programme Manager at Basmeh & Zeitooneh, in collaboration with Dr. Fiona Shanahan, Humanitarian Protection Advisor (Gender) at Trócaire.

The content includes input from Leonie Harsch, research consultant, Rola Soheil, artist and psychosocial Support specialist, and Nibal Al Alo, clinical social worker at Basmeh & Zeitooneh.

The workshop Participants have chosen different roles in different activities and outputs, such as co-authorship of interim reports produced and have approved specific material for technical dissemination.

ACRONYMS

I-NGO International Non-Governmental Organization
NGO Non-Governmental Organization
PAR Participatory Action Research
PSS Psychosocial Support
PFA Psychological First Aid
B&Z Basmeh and Zeitooneh
UN United Nations
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Basmeh and Zeitooneh was established in 2012 by a group of volunteers as an initiative to respond to the needs of refugees in Lebanon. Since then, it has been able to maintain a grassroots approach, and continue to design and implement processes in partnership with programme participants and responsive to their input, feedback and recommendations. The implemented programmes are aimed at developing skills, enhancing psychological well-being, and increasing individual and communal capacity.

Programmes are implemented through community centers, located within the most marginalized areas in Lebanon and Turkey. This approach reduces the immediate tangible barriers vulnerable people face in accessing assistance. The space serves as a focal point for people to access information and support, a safe space to meet and build networks, as well as the venue where our activities are held. Using this approach enables us to provide holistic solutions to individuals, families, and the community as we become part of its make-up.

Each center applies an open door policy and implements a strong external and internal referral system to ensure people have access to all services within or outside the area.
Participation and Programme

Basmeh & Zeitooneh and Trócaire have been working together since May 2015, in Shatila Refugee Camp in Beirut. The projects implemented through this partnership aimed to reduce the vulnerability of women, men, boys and girls affected by the ongoing conflict in the region. As a core component of the partnership, the protection programme has worked to deliver an understanding of mental health and psychosocial challenges related to displacement and conflict situations in adults and children from both refugee and host communities. The protection programme includes a range of psychosocial support activities at different levels of specialisation. Social Workers provide group-based psychosocial support to women, girls, boys and men, while Clinical Social Worker Nibal Al Alo delivers specialised individual psychosocial support and group-based psychosocial support. Referrals to psychiatric and clinical psychological services are available where indicated.

The programme activities are designed to meet the immediate needs of vulnerable communities, particularly women and young girls, men and boys affected by protracted crises in a manner that protects their safety, dignity and fundamental human rights while also enabling them to prepare for and be more resilient to future crises. This is done through the integration of relief, developmental, and protection services within one centre to enhance the community’s sense of security.

The Participatory Action Research project

Participants in the women’s group psychosocial sessions initially identified the theme of ‘the experience of coping and adapting to life in Shatila’ as something they wanted to explore collectively and through creative methods. In October 2016, Nour Beydoun and Nibal Al Alo raised this idea with Dr. Fiona Shanahan, Trócaire Humanitarian Protection Adviser, and together they developed the concept of a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project led by these women participants and using creative participatory methodologies. Irish Aid provided funding for this research, which began in March 2017. An external psychosocial specialist and artist, Rola Souheil, joined the team and led on the research activities.

Sixteen participants, including fifteen Syrian women and one Palestinian woman volunteered to participate in this research. All participants had previously participated in one cycle of the embroidery skills training at the Women’s Workshop, one cycle of group based psychosocial support with a Clinical Social Worker, which included creative storytelling approaches and at least 8 sessions of individual psychosocial support with the same Clinical Social Worker.

The group meet on a weekly basis with the B&Z Clinical Social Worker (Nibal Al Alo) and an external artist and psychosocial specialist (Rola Souheil). The same group of women have been involved since March 2017 to the present, and continue to be involved in a range of B&Z psychosocial, protection, vocational and relief services. Ongoing psychosocial support is provided and referral to external services is available where needed.
Participants choose their preferred role in different activities and outputs, in the first phase all sixteen participants chose to be co-authors of interim reports produced and have approved specific material (art and quotes) for technical dissemination. Over time, some participants left the programme as some moved to other areas of the country or returned to Syria. In the second phase, ten participants who had been part of the process throughout are co-authors of the final report and produced the paintings in the final exhibition.

► What is Participatory Action Research?

Participatory action research (PAR) is an approach to research in communities that emphasizes participation and action. It seeks to understand the world by trying to change it, collaboratively and following reflection. PAR emphasizes collective inquiry and experimentation grounded in experience and social history.

In this project, women participants identified the core theme they were interested in exploring, and then had full control over the direction of the project and their participation in it throughout. Women participated in weekly group sessions focus on exploring experiences of transition, coping and adaptation through expressive techniques including drama exercises and games. Painting as a technique was introduced through an iterative process, with participants initially selecting reproductions of existing works that resonated with them and developing responses to these and over time developing auto-portraits which had emotional resonance and expressed some aspect of their lives.

► Who Should Use the Toolkit?

It is important to speak in the participant’s mother tongue as people can express themselves much more fully in their own language. If you don’t speak the local language, you can co-facilitate your work with someone who can speak the language and has psychosocial knowledge.

Very short term or one off activities are not recommended, unless you have an existing relationship with the group and can offer further support.

It is important to ensure the project is resourced appropriately from the beginning, and that there are sufficient trained staff, budget and time to deliver on the project to ensure that participants have a positive experience.

► Tips to Keep in Mind

The Tools from this manual seek to promote psychosocial well-being and mental health. When selecting tools, it is important to remember that they should promote:

- A sense of safety
- Calming
- Hope
- A sense of self-efficacy and collective efficacy
- Connectedness
- If in doubt, come back to these essential elements to help guide your decision.
Are you a PSS worker with training in psychosocial support? You might be a:

- PSS programme officer in an NGO, INGO or UN agency
- A professional with training in PSS, such as a social worker, art therapist, drama therapist

Have you been trained on how to refer people to PSS support services?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If YES, answer the following questions:

If NO, please read about making referrals later on in this guidebook.

Are you supervised by someone?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Can you meet or call this person at least once a month, or more often when you start working with a new group?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you know someone trained in PSS in or outside of your organisation that you can talk to about your experiences and get advice on your decisions?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Are you from the community where you are working?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Does your organisation currently have programmes in the community?

Yes ☐ No ☐
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have strong links with support structures in the community (women’s groups, youth groups, religious communities, men’s groups, health promotion groups)?</td>
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<td>Have these groups requested additional psychosocial support?</td>
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<td>Do you speak the mother tongue of the people you work with?</td>
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<td>If YES, answer the following questions:</td>
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<td>If NO, can you work with someone who does speak the language and train them to provide PSS?</td>
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<td>Do you plan to work with the group over a period of time (e.g. 8-12 weeks or longer), not necessarily just doing PSS</td>
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<td>Do you have enough time for this work?</td>
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<td>Do you have enough funding to carry out this work?</td>
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<td>Do you have the time and resources to provide regular follow up after the programme ends?</td>
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SECTION 2: CREATING A SAFE SPACE

Selecting Participants – safety, criteria, trust

When designing the programme activities, confidentiality is a very important aspect that should be kept in mind. All the information shared by participants in the space, whether related to them or their close circle should be kept confidential. This aspect should be highlighted when putting together the group commitments, and it should be understood by the participants as well as facilitators for the sessions.

The initial idea of the expressive arts sessions was suggested to the programme participants, who wanted to share and document their experiences of coping and displacement. Having participated in at least eight sessions of group-based psychosocial support, and eight sessions of individual support with the clinical staff member, the participants were enrolled on the basis of their will to take part in the project.

To avoid causing harm and to ensure that their psychological and physical wellbeing are maintained, the clinical social worker was present to closely follow-up on the ‘therapeutic’ aspect of the process, during the artistic sessions and the collection of the data by the researcher. Moreover, the presence of a familiar staff member with relevant experience and with strong ties to the participants can be of support when obtaining consent for the dissemination of findings.

Our initial experience of this process was through engaging female participants of Syrian and Palestinian nationalities, in a process of reflection that has foregrounded identities, memory, relational processes, loss and the desire to be seen and heard. Through this approach, participants were able to transfer the aspects of their identity as females and behaviors that are frowned upon to the canvas. They have also used these methods to symbolize their wishes, the imaginary connections to others. These methods were particularly helpful to the participants in exploring their identity, redefining the common perceptions of female refugees and the role of females in the community.

Referral pathways

Ongoing psychosocial support is provided and referral to external services is available where needed. In areas where you feel like you must make a referral, you should always go back to available services within your organization. If these services are not provided by your programme, it is always a good idea to rely on the service mapping of implementing organizations, keeping accessibility and cultural appropriateness of services in mind. It is important to always inform the concerned individual of the referral and to obtain their consent before proceeding. Where possible, it is advised to provide different options before making the referral, keeping in mind distance, accessibility, relevance and timeframe for the response. To avoid causing harm, avoid making promises beyond your actual capacities. In some situations, the concerned participant may not wish to proceed with the referral. Their wish should always be primary, except for situations where making the referral is an ethical and a professional obligation. This includes cases where the participant’s life is at risk, or in situations where the life of others can be at stake.
Psychosocial supports available

Support circles that already exist in the community itself are considered as essential in the delivery of psychosocial support. The coping mechanisms put into practice by female members of the community to respond to the growing needs of their families guide the systems approach used in the design of the psychosocial support programmes within B&Z. The design and implementation of the programme considers the individual as a member of a family and community, and considers both as a system. The programme activities thus become part of an intervention within the wider system of support, with existing actors and mechanisms and is based on the understanding that any kind of connection between the support providers and the programme participants happens within a context with shifting dynamics and preexisting complexities.

In line with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines on Mental Heath and Psychosocial Support in Emergencies (2007), psychosocial supports offered in the Shatila Centre build on these local capacities. The programme takes a family-focused approach in that different members of the same family are invited to engage in the psychosocial supports available, as and when they feel they would benefit from additional supports. Psychosocial supports are offered at different levels of specialisation and are all linked in with each other, with referrals between services when needed. This includes group based psychosocial supports for children (boys and girls), women and men which run in cycles throughout the year, and individual psychosocial support with the Clinical Social Worker, when indicated. Referrals and emergency financial assistance to facilitate psychiatric care are also available, particularly for those with pre-existing conditions who often face difficulties managing their mental health and accessing health services in Shatila.
**Staff Support and Supervision**

The protection team providing support to the programme participants are of Syrian and Lebanese origins. They share similar challenges related to this “involuntary dislocation”, in terms of coping and grieving relational losses in times of crisis. The same team members have been providing ongoing support for the past two years, to the same members of the community, adapting their approach as time progresses.

With loss and grief as an entry point, they have worked with the participants on accepting the temporariness of their new “home”, or adapting to the new reality while preserving their values and culture. This has supported the creation of a heartfelt, emotional climate, where the staff members have become an element of the support circle.

A new social network has been established between them, making it harder to accept another relational loss experience. Each departure resonates with a personal loss for the staff, adding another layer of grief to their own. The uncertainty of returning “home” makes the future a blurry one, while also making it harder to accept the current reality with its shifting power dynamics and constant change in roles.

For these reasons, it is particularly critical to have good staff support and supervision mechanisms in place to ensure staff safety and psychosocial well-being in the current context. In this programme, this included monthly individual and/or group supervision sessions with an external Clinical Psychologist for each member of the Protection unit. This is an essential quality measure for any psychosocial or protection programme, but is particularly important in humanitarian responses or contexts where staff experience multiple losses associated with the work.

**Shared decision making**

In the reflective process, a community-based protection approach as well as participatory methods were used to facilitate the identification and the analysis of the topics participants wished to discuss and include in the research report. The participants have the choice of either co-authoring, validating or editing the final report. This approach involves the participants in all stages of the work, and seeks to increase their feelings of safety and dignity. Participants choose their preferred role in different activities and outputs, so far all 16 participants have chosen to be co-authors of interim reports produced and have approved specific material (art and quotes) for technical dissemination. These group sessions focus on exploring experiences of transition, coping and adaptation through expressive techniques including drama exercises and games.

For women living in severely constrained and oppressive conditions, participatory, open and non-directive methods of expression can potentially open up a space to be seen more richly, holistically and in more depth.
Lessons learned – what we might do differently

The expressive art workshop is a reflective, therapeutic process. At first, when agreeing on the frequency of the sessions and while examining group dynamics, challenges are expected to arise, particularly on the relational level, in terms of breaking the ice with the artist and participants, introducing the techniques and the methodology. The work that results from the art process leads the way towards greater personal understanding, and therefore the procedure cannot be rushed seeing its importance to the therapeutic process.

The value of the creative space has paved the way for the inner worlds of the participants to be given life. Through each of the twelve sessions, the group members were invited to find meaning and attribute their own symbolism to the process of art making and the very personal images that arise.

The process of diving into the personal history of each individual only began to happen after trust was established between the group members and when the participants began to feel more secure in the space. The project was therefore divided into two phases, the first that took part during the first period of 2017 and the second will happen during the second half to ensure the group has come to an awareness of the artistic and psychosocial aspects of the workshop.

Looking at the work process as a method of communication, the symbolism used to communicate emotions. The use of drama exercises during the sessions as rituals of beginning and of closure enhanced verbal exchange between the participants and supported the process of personal reflection, resolving conflicts, solving problems, and formulating new perceptions that in turn lead to positive change, growth, and healing.

By experiencing the creative art making process and the potential of symbolism in communicating experiences, the participants have found a way to healing, recovery, and transformation. The process of making art is in itself a therapeutic experience, and is an opportunity to use imagination in an authentic and spontaneous way. This can lead to personal fulfilment, emotional reparation, and alteration.
The use of drama therapy activities in the sessions was one of the techniques applied to ensure that the space is active, experiential, and supports projection and embodiment, facilitating the way for participants to share stories and express feelings. Through drama exercises, interpersonal relationship skills can be practiced, and participants can be more flexible and spontaneous in their interactions within the circle.

The trainer, Rola Souheil, has a background in both fine arts and psychosocial support. The expressive art workshop held in Shatila applies the principles of Gestalt theory in drama therapy, such as figure/ground, closure, as well as viewing perception as an active process.

This implies a process-oriented approach in working with artistic methods that supports the concept of perceiving and understanding. Our focus is not merely the product of creative expression but the process through which it came to be. The realization that thought and emotion are inseparable helps us understand the relationship between the patterns in our lives and their location within the context of our reality. Several participants have expressed a feeling of relief, when exercises lead to crying for example. Other participants have also expressed a change in their perception of their bodies, once considered an object of little importance, is now experienced in a more spontaneous way, and seen as an essential element of communication, particularly when expressing emotions and feelings.

By focusing on productive thinking, one of the objectives of the sessions is to support the participants in the transformation of familiar elements into more valuable, unique elements. This was made possible by working in parallel on the technical aspect of artistic methods to understand the relationship between figure (what emerges to the surface) and ground (what is in the background), gaining insight and giving meaning to their experiences. The reorganization of familiar, inadequately configured elements of the participants’ life prior to displacement and their “new” life into something valuable reflects the importance of using a theoretical framework in both drama and art. When these elements have been reconfigured, they begin to make more sense and seem to fit the larger picture. Experiencing the manifestation of inner capabilities with artistic materials during therapeutic interactions, strengthens the support mechanisms that were developed in-group and turn the process into something beyond mere self-expression.

Introductory session outline

The ideal timing for the workshops is between three to four hours. Each session is structured as follows:

- 30 minutes for the opening exercises
- 2 hours 30 minutes for the main activity
- 1 hour for the closing activity.

If possible and if the space and time allow it, it is preferable to include relaxing background music.
Opening exercises

The session starts with a check-in exercise, a creative game to help the trainer get an understanding of the participants emotional state at the beginning of the session before getting started with the main activity.

Below is a sample opening activity that was used in the workshop:

**Time:** 15 to 30 minutes (depending on the number of participants, each should get a turn in the circle if they wish to share.)

**Objective:** To create a stress-free environment, to establish a connection with the self.

**Exercise:**
1. Ask the participants to sit or stand in a circle facing inwards;
2. Start by thanking the participants for their time and commitment and brief them on the outline of the session;
3. Ask the participants how they are doing, and explain that instead of the usual answer, they will use a color as the symbol of their feeling. Give an example using different colors such as: I’m yellow, I’m blue, I’m red.
4. Explain that different colors have different meanings for each participants.
5. Allow time for thinking and reflecting on the exercise and time to clarify the activity. Tell participants that they have the freedom not to share their answer, but encourage them to reflect on their feelings.

**Variation:** it is possible to replace color symbolism with sound or physical movement as appropriate.

Creative expression exercises

Below is a step-by-step description of the process followed during the workshop:

**Time:** 150 minutes (with a break half-way through the session)

**Objective:** To familiarize the participants with modern art, artists, history and to stimulate reflection.

**Material:** For each participant, provide a set of painting material including:

- 50x70cm canvas,
- Painting knives set
- Painting brushes set (sizes Small, Medium and Large)
- Painting brushes set (size 0.5/1/2/6/4/8/12)
- Yellow carbon paper pad (size A3)
- Acrylic paint tubes (red, blue, yellow,white and black)
- Printed copies of the selected art work in size 50x70cm
**Exercise:**
1. Begin by explaining to the participant the purpose of the exercise and the allocated time;
2. Give a briefing about the selected art work (history, artist, country...);
3. Allocate about 30 minutes for the participants to examine the prints, and reflect on what resonates with their emotional state;
4. Ask each participant to select a print, and follow the guidelines for working with the printing technique and color theory, consisting of using carbon paper to trace the outline of the image onto the canvas and then using acrylic paint to fill the form. The color selection will differ for each participant, and will differ from the original image as the process invites them to connect their choice of color with their emotional state.

**Variation:** If size 50x70 is not available, a 60x60 or 40x40 canvas is a suitable alternative. If acrylic paint is not available, chalk pastel can be used as an alternative.

► **Trust building exercises**

A series of drama exercises to encourage group trust and appreciation of the other were used with the participants.

**Below is a step-by-step description of the activity:**

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Objective:** To enhance group trust and encourage sharing within the group.

**Exercise:**
1. Ask the participants to walk around the space, filling the empty spaces.
2. When you feel that the timing is appropriate, ask the participants to make eye contact with the first person they encounter.
3. At a later stage, ask the participants to stop and turn to face the closest person them. Ask them to maintain eye contact for as long as possible.
4. Once the pairs have been formed, ask the participants to choose who will be leading and who will be mirroring. Explain that they will mirror the physical movement of the other, try to keep it as simple as possible.
5. After a few movements, ask the participants to switch roles, and repeat the previous step.
6. Once the activity is over, ask the participants to sit down in a comfortable position, in a circle. The following questions can be used to initiate the discussion:

- What did you discover from the exercises.
- How did this affect you?
- How did this workshop change and helped you?
Emotional expression exercises

At the end of each art workshop, the participants are asked whether they would like to share feedback about the process. Questions can be used to guide the discussion and encourage reflections on the production of the artwork, and its relation to the participants’ emotional state.

Below is a step-by-step guide of the activity:

**Time:** 30 minutes  
**Objective:** To enhance group trust and encourage sharing within the group.  
**Exercise:**
1. Ask the participants to find a comfortable spot in the circle;  
2. If possible, ask the participants to have their artwork near them, visible to the group;  
3. Explain to the participants that sharing is optional, and that what they share will remain in the circle;  
   They have the freedom to opt out of the activity if they do not feel comfortable sharing their feedback.  
4. Ask if anyone in the circle would like to volunteer to tell the story of the people (or person) in their artwork. Details can include sensory aspects of their clothing like the texture, the scents, or extend beyond the visible elements such as the weather, the date, etc.

Safety guideline: *Always ensure that there is someone available to support the participants individually should anyone feel uncomfortable during the activity. As much as possible, try to make sure that everyone has had proper closure before closing the activity and leaving the circle.*

Reflection and analysis activities

After each session, the participants are encouraged to reflect on the process of expressing their feelings through forms and colors. The use of symbolism in the paintings facilitates expression by using a tangible medium to support them in shaping their thoughts and emotions.

The process of putting thoughts, feelings and emotions into form and color is followed by a debriefing session with the clinical social worker in the presence of the artist. The methodology for these reflection circles and analysis activities varies from one setting to another, depending on the group’s ability and readiness to articulate and relate their emotional state and put it into words. It also depends on the level of trust established within the circle.

Below is a step-by-step guide of the activity:

**Time:** 30 minutes  
**Objective:** To enhance group trust and encourage sharing within the group; to encourage reflection and develop a dialogue with the self.  
**Exercise:**
1. Ask the participants to sit in a circle in a comfortable position;
2. Guide the participants through the discussion to reach the discovery stage by asking questions like:
3. How did you feel when you were painting the picture?
4. What did you discover about yourself?
5. What kind of change do you think this process can lead to?
6. What are you thinking of now?
7. Remind the participants that they are not obliged to share their answers if they are not comfortable doing so, and that this discussion is to support them in making imaginary elements from their artwork more tangible. The questions are used to guide the group through the process of structuring their thoughts and feelings.

► Closing exercises

Closing exercises are used to support the participants in reaching a closure after the artistic exercises and reflection circle.

**Below is a step-by-step guide of the relaxation exercise:**

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Objective:** To bring the participants back to the present moment, and focus on the current reality.

1. Ask the participants to find a comfortable place in the space
2. Ask the participants to close their eyes. If anyone is not comfortable closing their eyes, tell them that they can look at the floor.
3. Slowly count to ten, and tell the participants to start noticing their breathing. “Notice the in breath, notice the out breath, notice the momentary space between the two. If you feel discomfort in any way, adjust your body so that you are comfortable. Continue to inhale and exhale consciously. Now concentrate on taking slow, deep, regular, steady breaths through the nose. Upon breathing out, think of the meaning of the verb “to relax”.”
4. Say: “When you exhale, imagine that you let go of all tension in your body. Imagine, that with every breath leaving your body you let go of worries or thoughts that burden you. Imagine that the wind will blow all worries and thoughts away. When you inhale, imagine that you take in new energy with each breath. Imagine that a profound feeling of peace will come over you.”
5. Let the group continue this breathing exercise in silence for about 5 minutes.
6. Give the participants as much time as needed to finish their meditative activity, and invite them to slowly reopen their eyes when they are ready and to adjust their position to an upright one.
An interim workshop report was co-authored with participants completed June 2017 and research report co-authored with participants is due to be completed in early 2018. Art Exhibitions were held in Shatila and Beirut in December 2017, which included artwork developed by each participant and a video of the process of the research. There is also a published book of paintings and narrative reflections for participants to share with their families and communities. This technical guide for practitioners on the Participatory Action Research approach is also a key programming resource based on learning and findings from the research. While the final exhibitions, book and report will focus on participants’ final selected artworks and narratives, technical outputs such as this guide and any research presentations instead focus on their reflections on the process and is aimed at a technical audience. The content shared here have been approved by the participants for this purpose.

Planning and designing exhibitions

When planning for an exhibition, it is important to keep in mind the target audience. Finding a venue that can display the artworks and allows visitors to circulate and observe can be challenging, which is why it is advised to have a planning committee. Members of the committee would include volunteers or staff members who would ideally have a background in art, and members who are available and have enough time to support in the procurement of the necessary material and the facilitation of the logistics.

The optimal location to exhibit the artwork should consider accessibility and proximity, as well as cultural acceptance of the project. Exhibition hours should also take into consideration the participants’ availability and whether they would wish to invite their family and community members. During exhibition hours, a member of the committee with knowledge of the artworks should be present to answer any questions and guide the visitors around the gallery space. All material related to the logistics of the exhibition such as lighting, sound, projection and set-up at the space should be made available.

When planning the exhibition for the PAR project, the budget considered allocation of funding for two exhibition spaces, one at the community center and another at an art gallery outside the camp setting. The design of the budget also included the cost of transporting the artwork to the gallery, the design and printing cost of posters, invitations, food and beverage as well as printing fees of posters and invitations.
It is important to share the exhibition dates as early as possible with the relevant network members, whether through sector coordination groups or personal networks. It is also important to contextualize the content of the posters, pamphlets, and other material and adapt them to the local language, as well as to have them validated by the participants.

► Publishing a booklet

Throughout the workshop, the process was documented by a photographer and a video producer. The participants’ feedback was also documented by the researcher, contracted for the purpose of the report production. After obtaining consent from the group to publish their artwork, they were asked whether they would want to use their real names to accompany their artwork, or if they’d rather use pseudonyms.

The content of the booklet for the participants was developed in Arabic, and validated by the group members. It includes images of their artwork, and short descriptions of the impact of the programme. During the exhibition, the booklet is shared with the participants’ families and friends, local stakeholders and residents of the area.

The guidebook outlines the technical approach aimed at practitioners, in order to use the learning from this process in future protection programming in Shatila and more broadly. The content development was a cooperative process between Fiona Shanahan, Trócaire Humanitarian Protection Adviser, Nour Beydoun, Basmeh & Zeitooneh Protection Technical Programme Manager, Rola Souheil, the artist implementing the workshop, Nibal Al Alo, Basmeh & Zeitooneh Clinical Social Worker, Leonie Harsch, the researcher contracted by Basmeh & Zeitooneh for the project. The guidebook is aimed at practitioners and organizations who implement psychosocial support programmes in similar contexts or wish to do so. Hard copies of the guidebook will be shared at the exhibition as well as soft copies through sector working groups in Lebanon.

► Producing a research report

In the last phase of the project, a research partnership was developed with an external researcher, Leonie Harsch, in order to ensure that women participant has the option of having their reflections and analysis documented in a way that made sense to them and that they felt their voice had been heard through the project. Leonie worked very closely with Nibal Al Alo to develop a semi-structured interview schedule (Annex 1) to guide individual conversations with each participant who volunteered for this aspect of the research project.

The strength of this collaboration lay in our shared commitment to participatory ways of working, ethical sensitivity and do no harm, equality in the relationships between participants, practitioners and researchers and a commitment that ownership of the research lies first and foremost with programme participants. The following guide was used as a starting point for conversations with women participants, although naturally each conversation took its own course in response to participants’ interests, experiences and priorities.
Compared to the form which the research process of a purely academic project would have taken, the conception of research under the umbrella of an NGO project was slightly different. A major reason for this is that the framework and focus of the research was predetermined by the organisation from the beginning. This is understandable, considering that an important purpose of the interviews was to document the participants’ reflections on their paintings and to acknowledge them in their capacity as artists. In an academic context, a review of existing literature on related topics would have informed the formulation of the research questions to a larger extent than in this case.

Regarding the collection and interpretation of the data, it should be considered that the interviews took place in the workshop space in which the painting sessions took place, that the clinical social worker who had been supporting the participants previously was present, and that the participants were aware that the report was commissioned by B&Z. This likely had an impact on the interviewees’ responses to the questions regarding their experiences with the project and may have inclined them to focus on positive aspects. In an academic context, the possibility that interviewees perceive the researcher to be associated with the donors would not exist.

The conditions under which the interviews were conducted may also have blurred the line between an interview about their views for the purpose of research and documentation and a counselling session from the participants’ perspective. Yet, in light of the experiences with conducting the interviews, the presence of the clinical social worker was very important and helpful in creating an atmosphere in which the participants felt safe. Some of the interviewees were very emotional in their responses and became upset when recounting difficult experiences. The Clinical Social Workers’ professional experience and in-depth knowledge of the participants’ background and challenges was therefore crucial in order to respond appropriately and to guide the conversation into a direction which would not cause them harm. Outside the setting of the art sessions, the participants have access to focused individual support, in which the clinical staff member from B&Z guides them by elaborating short-term intervention plans in-line with their needs and expectations.

Adapting Programming using Participatory Action Research findings and outputs

The findings of participatory action research can be incredibly useful in adapting programme guidance. Programme participants are best placed to advise on areas of focus and priorities for programming. Within specific areas, such as psychosocial support groups, participants will often advise what kinds of activities, discussion topics and formats are preferable.
Programme guidance for psychosocial staff often includes toolkits of sample session outlines for women, girls, men and boys, monitoring and evaluation tools and other activity guides such as playback theatre, mobile cinema or puppet shows for example. Outputs developed by PAR participants can often inform or even be used directly in future programme activities, with the consent and participation of those who designed the outputs. Culturally appropriate activities are critical to ensuring that people feel that the psychosocial support offered to them is relevant to their needs and situations. The findings of the PAR, which are discussed in more detail in the forthcoming research report, foreground women participants' identities, memories and the need to be seen and heard, richly in all their complexity. This critical element of understanding and responding to the person, holistically, can sometimes be squeezed or sacrificed in the ongoing challenges of short-termism and the limitations of humanitarian funding. These women participants have offered us a valuable corrective in this respect and have challenged us to continually improve the depth as well as the quality of our responses to people living in crisis.
Please use pseudonyms in these notes to protect participant confidentiality. Please monitor safety issues and make referrals where needed through the existing B&Z referral mechanism.

Informed consent:
Thank you for making time to speak with me today about your painting. I am going to write a report about the project in which you are participating here with B&Z. We consider it important that this report includes your views and experiences from the beginning of the project until today. Therefore, I would like to ask you some questions about the picture which you painted.

I want to remind you that this conversation is not something we have to do. It is completely up to you whether we talk now and you may not feel like it, and if so that is completely fine.

Everything you say is going to be anonymous in order to protect your personal data. If you allow me to record our conversation, this would be helpful for writing the report. Nobody except for myself and a colleague who assists with the transcription will hear this recording, and it will be deleted once it has been transcribed. If you prefer not to record the interview, this is fine. In this case, I am going to take notes.

Sometimes talking about your life can bring up difficult feelings, even if you feel fine at the time, you can feel uncomfortable or distressed later on. If this happens please let me or ____________________ [other named staff member trusted by participant] know so that we can support you.

If you prefer not to answer any question or would like to take a break of stop the interview, please let me know and we will skip that question or stop immediately.

Do you have any questions for me?

Are you happy to continue? Yes __ No __

Do you consent to recording the interview? Yes __ No __
Interview questions:
I am interested in your thoughts regarding this painting in order to gain a better understanding of how it came about and what it means to you. Could you please tell me, from the start and in as much detail as you can, the story of how you came to paint this?

Prompts:
• What are your experiences in dealing with colours?
• How did this painting come about?
• Why did you choose this motive?

When you look at the painting now, what comes to mind?

Prompts:
• What do you think about the persons whom we see in the painting?
• What are they doing/thinking/seeing?
• What do you think about the expression on their faces?
• What are your thoughts on the colours of this painting?

How did you experience the painting sessions?
• What does the place in which the sessions were conducted mean to you?
• If there was a future project of this kind, is there anything you would like to change in it or add?

Thank you very much!

Co-authorship and roles in the research:
Has the participant expressed what role she would like to have in producing the report, such as co-authoring, reviewing, or validating it? __________________