uOttawa

COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION IN CRISIS

END OF YEAR REPORT

2018

In 2018, the Community Mobilization in Crisis Project continued to develop its digital open access educational curriculum and implemented multiple pilots in Canada, Lebanon, and Brazil. As well, the educational materials were used by students at the University of Ottawa as part of their International Development and Global Studies course headed by Prof. Nadia Abu-Zahra. During the course of the year, CMIC has begun implementing different aspects of the project, spanning from curriculum development to incubating and supporting mobilizers, whether students or refugees.

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CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

The Community Mobilization in Crisis Project has conducted over 40 interviews from the past year with community mobilizers from Palestine, Lebanon, Iraqi Kurdistan, Indigenous peoples in Canada, as well as from India and Mexico. We had asked community mobilizers to share their narratives and experiences as organizers who had designed community-based initiatives and solutions. We reached out to different forms and types of mobilizations in various contexts in order to provide a wide variety of cases and examples for those using our materials. We interviewed organizations and institutionalized groups in addition to grassroots mobilizers, those who have long and short term goals and plans, those who receive funding and those who are self-sustained, those who work on advocacy and others who work on practical solutions to their community's needs. There is not only one type of mobilization and CMIC operates as a platform to give coverage to all of these different types that have worked and succeeded in their context and circumstances. However, we do not see 'success' as an ultimate goal that we use to measure the mobilizations with, and it is not used to set our requirements for interview selection. Instead, we emphasize the fact that community-based organizations and groups are often placed in uphill battles and that there are lessons to be learnt throughout the journey. Success is built on many failures, and failures might follow success. Valuable knowledge lies in how these individuals, collectives, and groups pass through the waves of challenges to, perhaps not always overcome, but to cope and carry on in times of crisis. These are the teaching moments that our interviews try to capture in order to be transformed into educational materials that potential community mobilizers can use to further their own efforts.

The development of the curriculum was guided by themes and concepts that have emerged from the interviews with the community mobilizers. When mobilizers talk about their initiatives and projects, they do so by explaining their community's needs, resources, and overall context. They frame their actions in a vision of community ownership and agency. We then ask questions on how they navigated their spaces, which are overcrowded with systematic barriers and problems, and what sort of knowledge and tactics they used.

The curriculum now has themes ready such as:

- LOCAL RESOURCES & ASSEST-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
- KNOWLEDGE
- VARIETIES OF COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION
- COMMUNITY
- GROUP PROCESS
- AND MORE BEING DEVELOPED!

The curriculum aims to mimic a conversation between experienced community mobilizers and those aiming to be by providing advice and experiences in the form of educational materials. However, the curriculum is not meant to become a blueprint for future mobilizers to follow step-by-step, but rather a toolbox to help them explore new techniques that they can contextualize and make their own. As part of our co-creation vision, the curriculum is open to contributions from other mobilizers and is in effect continuously growing and expanding.

The educational materials are:

- **OPEN-ACCESS**
- **DIGITAL**
- **RE-MIXABLE**

They are packaged into:

LEARNING OBJECTS
which are in the format of short introductory texts of definitions and concept in addition to the edited videos of the community mobilizers' interviews.

E-PORTFOLIO
Each object then has a series of e-Portfolio questions that aim to guide the user into thinking about their own initiatives or goals.

STRUCTURED COURSES
The Learning Objects can be collated into a personalized structured course manually selected to suit a learning objective and the e-Portfolio questions follow this structure.

CMIC has developed a complete guide on how to use the materials in their different formats and options as either a mobilizer in training, a team leader in an organization or group, civil society activists, or individuals trying to learn new techniques and new themes.

The educational materials can be found statically on our website:

HTTP://CMIC-MOBILIZE.ORG/MATERIALS

The Trainer's Guidebook can be found here:

HTTP://CMIC-MOBILIZE.ORG/MATERIALS/THE-TRAINERS-GUIDEBOOK/

CMIC PILOTS 2018

Community Mobilization in Crisis (CMIC) implemented pilot courses using the digital educational materials in Lebanon and in Brazil.

LEBANON

From August 27th till September 22nd in Lebanon, the pilot titled "Community-Based Mobilization in Crisis" was done in collaboration with the Department of Public Health at the American University of Beirut.

BRAZIL

As well, from September 21st till October 6th, CMIC implemented a pilot course titled "Community Mobilization and Social Change" at the University of Brasilia (UnB), in Brazil with Umanità Project of the Institute of International Relations (IREL), a student-based Human Rights research and outreach group.

Prior to these pilots, CMIC had a one-day workshop in Ottawa to pilot the platform and material in order to best assure that the content and technology were ready to be used by distance by our partners abroad in Lebanon and Brazil.

PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION MODEL

Evaluation of the pilot programs was vital in order to adapt our materials and approach to better support and implement future projects. The CMIC team ensured that the evaluation model was participatory such that input and viewpoints of the mobilizers-in-training were key aspects in the process of updating the curriculum and our modes of implementation. Input was sought from all of those involved in the pilot programs, such as the mobilizers-in-training (participants), program facilitators, research and implementation partners and the project team. The mixed-method evaluation plan utilized participatory qualitative and quantitative research methods; input from focus groups, program reports, de-briefings, as well as online weekly pilot questionnaires.

Our participatory approach began during the very first session, when participants were asked what they were expecting to learn and what skills they wanted to develop throughout the course in terms of concepts and skills. After this, the facilitators then demonstrated the materials in the course and detailed our goals expected goal to be achieved at the end of the pilot. During the Lebanon pilot, the program facilitators expressed that the intent of the 4-week intensive pilot was to help support mobilizations, or help with the thought process of starting an initiative with their own communities. The pilot in Brazil was in collaboration with student activists, and had as its goal understanding how different audiences interact with the materials and what themes and topics are best suited for each context.

Participants led the discussions and learning activities throughout the pilot courses and provided feedback on the materials. The critical engagement with the materials through constant dialogue and the creation of a space to do so aimed to allow the mobilizers-in-training to re-design the learning materials with the CMIC team. We were able to identify the themes and topics that resonated best with people in the refugee context in Lebanon, NGO workers, host community members, civil society activists, student activists, and all the intersections of the above mentioned.

For example, in Lebanon, mobilizers-in-training indicated that:

BURNOUT AND FAILURE

LEADERSHIP

WHAT IS COMMUNITY

EVALUATION

presented new ideas that they would use and think through, not just in their initiatives, but also in their work and everyday lives.

In addition to in-person discussions during every session, the mobilizers-in-training were provided with weekly questionnaires (three in total throughout the pilot) to provide feedback on content, accessibility, support, and structure of the course. The majority of participants filled out these questionnaires at the end of each week.

LEBANON PILOT

In Lebanon, the mobilizers-in-training were selected to participate in the pilot based on their commitment and ideas towards community-based initiatives and mobilizations. As part of the recruitment process, CMIC has asked those interested in applying for the pilot to answer a few questions pertaining to their problems in their communities, how they wished to address them, and through what mechanisms and tactics. We were not expecting a fully articulated concept of their initiatives, but were instead looking for individuals who valued community ties and agency. During the first call for applications that our research and implementing partners at the American University of Beirut had disseminated in the Bekaa, we had received 279 applications within the first two weeks, around which 75% of those were from within Syria, and a total of 54% woman. Those applying from Syria had requested to be contacted if this course were to be given again in the country so they would have the chance to apply once more.

FOUR-WEEK COURSE
AUGUST 27TH - SEPTEMBER 22ND

IN-CLASS SESSIONS

DIGITAL CURRICULUM

14* PARTICIPANTS
INITIALLY 15

7 MEN / 7 WOMEN

4 LEBANESE
8 SYRIANS
1 PRS
1 PRL

AGE GROUP:
18-49

11/15 UNIVERSITY GRADUATES
2/15 VOCATIONAL TRAINING
1/15 SECONDARY SCHOOL

THE MAJORITY HAS WORK EXPERIENCE IN NGOS OR INGOS

MOBILIZATIONS

The course was structured such that by the end of the pilot, all of the activities and the tasks to be fulfilled would feed into a project proposal form. This form helps outlines the initiatives and asks the mobilizers to lay out their ideas and action plan in a concrete and practical fashion. The first three weeks of the pilot were intended to guide the mobilizers into thinking in details about their communities, their place in it, identifying the problem, assessing community resources, and assessing the situation, all while taking into consideration the necessity to pursue personal care through mental and physical health. All of the materials and the e-Portfolio questions were in Arabic. The materials defied the conventional learning style of memorization and reiteration found very common and as a default method of teaching in Lebanon, Syria, UNRWA schools, and elsewhere. The mobilizers-in-training, having themselves experienced this learning pattern, were expecting to find the answers to the e-Portfolio questions in the videos themselves and were unsure of their answers when there was not an identical match. Therefore, a discussion early on in the course focused on the need to change school systems in order to better engage students with education instead of requiring them to recite and reproduce knowledge without much critique.

COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH

The mobilizers were trained on how to conduct community-based research in order to ensure that their communities were part of the initiative as a collective effort rather than that of an sole individual imposing a project.

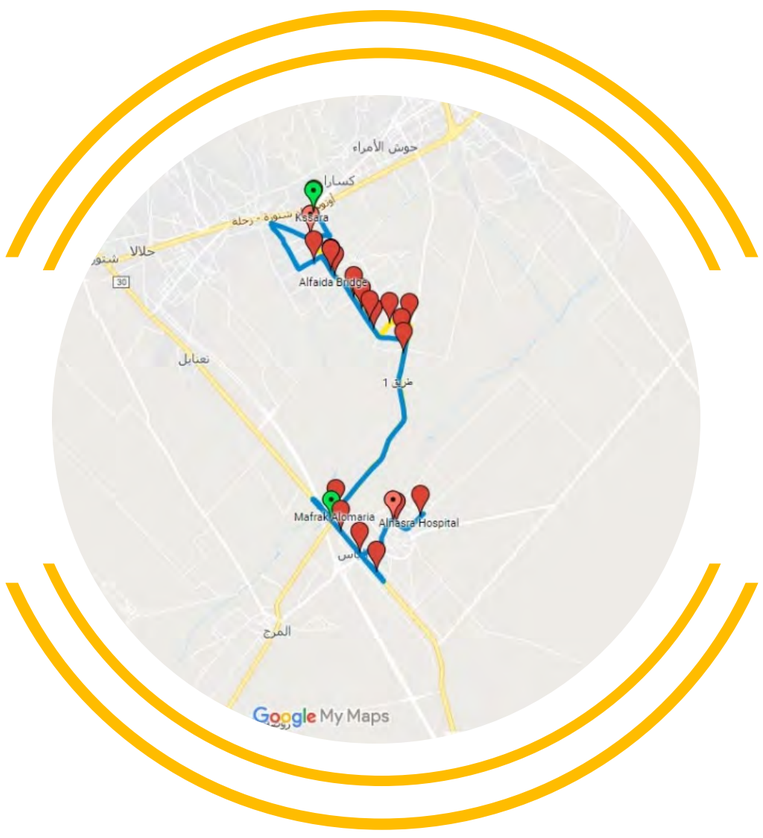
LOCAL CASE STUDY

A local mobilizer from a case study that was part of the curriculum gave a talk and information about the Naameh Landfill mobilization, which provided room for the mobilizers to ask questions and relate back to their own work.

FIELD WORK

No in-person sessions were held during the last week of the project. This time was for the mobilizers to carry out their assessment and research as well as to start outlining their initiatives in the project proposal form. The CMIC team was readily available to answer questions and address concerns throughout this week through email, telephone, and WhatsApp.

On the last day of the pilot, the mobilizers presented their initiatives and provided a brief summary of their proposal forms. Some mobilizers chose to work in teams while others worked individually. Those who worked in teams were either from the same community, if defined to a limited geographic location such as a camp or town, or identified as allies extending their efforts to help support initiatives outside of theirs. The initiatives focused on the themes of education, livelihoods, breaking stereotypes, and addressing barriers such as transportation.



One initiative worked on providing and sustaining an active line of transportation from her camp in Ber Elias in Bekaa, to the main road of the town, since camps tend to be in secluded areas. The problem that her community was facing the fact that people had to walk 20 minutes, in the summer heat and in the winter cold, to get to available lines of transportation that would take them to their schools and workplace. She consulted with her community members, the municipality, and several drivers to design a bus schedule that would serve the camp.

Another initiative tackled the issue of how Arsal, an area that witnessed battles between ISIS and the Lebanese Army, now had a negative stereotype associated with it. A mobilizer from Arsal, along with two other Lebanese mobilizers, created a campaign that would encourage tourism in the area by emphasizing the life that this town maintains and holds. They talked with the locals and saw that creating a set of rotating bed-and-breakfasts among the traditional houses was the best way to encourage tourism while providing income for the community. The mobilizers, one of which has experience in media and advertisement, created a logo, a media campaign, and got successfully contacted celebrities to highlight their work.

As part of the co-creation vision, CMIC will follow up with the mobilizations and ask if they would be interested in having their experiences and initiatives as part of the ever-expanding CMIC curriculum. We seek to provide context-dependent case studies and examples, and the success of the initiatives that came out of the pilot would reflect the refugee and host-community experiences in Lebanon, especially after engaging with our materials.

BRAZIL PILOT

2-WEEK COURSE
SEPTEMBER 21 - OCTOBER 6

16 STUDENTS

AGE GROUP:
17 - 22

3
STUDENTS
JUST
ONLINE

THE STUDENTS ALREADY HAD PRIOR EXPERIENCES WITH BLENDED COURSES: ENGAGING WITH THE MATERIALS ONLINE IN ADDITION TO THE IN-PERSON ACTIVITIES.

Members of the Umanità Project have experiences participating in movements and calls for action against human rights violations and social injustices,including those who participated in occupations at the UnB against cuts in national education budgets.

The students were asked to think about their own communities and their involvement either with Umanità Project or other organizations or issues they are interested in. The students engaged with the online curriculum, which was made available in Portuguese, then held discussions on identifying shared problems, resources, challenges, as well as solutions to these challenges. They provided answers and wrote their ideas using the e-Portfolio that was specifically designed for this structured course. As well, a local mobilizer, Felipe Fiuza, was invited to speak to the team. He developed musical activities with children in the city of Paranoá, Federal District and uses his musical talents to promote development in that city. The students expected to learn about community mobilization from a more theoretical and academic perspective, but were pleased to gain more practical skills from working in groups to communicating with others.

HIGHLIGHTS AND FINDINGS

CONTENT, STRUCTURE, TECHNOLOGY

During the Lebanon pilot, the team in Lebanon had realized that the mobilizers-in-training had different perceptions on what community mobilization is. Therefore, long conversations took place to differentiate between mobilizations that are based within a community and that are driven by community agency and top-down service provision using the "we will do it for them" mentality. The aim of the pilot and CMIC's educational materials is to support cooperation and collective action within a community in order to break the cycle of dependence on aid and services that are at constant risk of erratically disappearing. We support the trade of passivity for community-based action.

Prior to the start of the Brazil pilot, we added "How do you define community mobilization?/ What do you think is community mobilization?" to our set of introductory questions to ask the students at Umanità. Within focus groups, they provided different forms of what they deemed as community mobilization: charity groups, NGOs, associations (neighbourhood associations), and community-based projects.

Therefore, CMIC has decided to produce a full module on:

WHAT IS COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION

in order to provide a concrete framework that would foster values such as coping, cooperation, communication, and community-based action.

After the What is a Community module, I started viewing the community in a different way, I started thinking about the needs, partnerships and engaging members, before I used to develop a project and deliver it to the community now I started thinking of ways to engage them

In regards to the unit on Burnout, participants felt that it taught them how to pause, question and adjust - one participant said

it taught me when I need to stop and start again... I'm open to new ideas and trying new things

In Lebanon, the majority of the participants had backgrounds working with NGOs, therefore the materials provided them with both theoretical and practical knowledge on the different kinds of community mobilization, enhancing their perspectives on mobilizations and what constitutes as communal or not. The participants from the pilots found that the materials had improved skills and enhanced their knowledge as well as provided added value to their work. The majority of mobilizers from Lebanon felt that they gained new ideas that they expect to use in their work, whether in organizations or in schools.

After receiving feedback on the content, CMIC has returned to the curriculum to update it through providing more definitions, supplementary readings, and expertise from our interviews. The course curriculum utilized two formats: the video-heavy and the text-heavy. The mobilizers preferred a balance between the two and suggested to include more supplementary readings to the videos while making the text-heavy modules more engaging and less time consuming. CMIC is creating new materials with the guidance of the mobilizers' feedback and perspectives.

CMIC's online platform is now going through updates after having the mobilizers and students engage with it. We hope to include new options in the platform such that offline use can be possible in addition to having the option of syncing e-Portfolio answers when internet becomes available. Participants in Lebanon recommended using hard copies of the supplementary readings; electronic copies remain preferable for mass use and environmental purposes, but since the materials are open source, printing remains an individual option.

CMIC' 19

SSHRC CONNECTION GRANT - TOT

CMIC has been successfully granted the Connection Grant from the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) in order to conduct Training of Trainers workshops.

DECEMBER 2018: OTTAWA/NEW YORK
JANUARY 2019: BEIRUT
APRIL 2019: TORONTO
+ DIGITALLY-FACILITATED WORKSHOPS IN ENGLISH & ARABIC

LOCAL GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS, STUDENT ACTIVISTS, LOCAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SHAMS NETWORK IN LEBANON, ATTRACTING LEBANESE AND SYRIAN CIVIL SOCIETY MEMBERS

CMIC will use these materials to engage in a series of knowledge mobilization activities, in a variety of contexts worldwide, that will both promote the use of our materials and determine strategic areas for development and innovation in order to ensure their broadest possible utilization. Our overall goal is to improve the state of practice in community mobilization education and training in both the post-secondary and professional development contexts, including in Canada, Lebanon, and other development and crisis contexts. We aim to raise awareness about the existence of these materials in the academic and non-profit communities in Canada, Lebanon, and other global contexts where they might be relevant.

Through our developmental evaluation approach, we will use the feedback and suggestions to further advance and innovate our nascent tools.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

As well, CMIC has received the Exploration Grant from the Storytelling program at the National Geographic Society.

LEBANON
PALESTINE
IRAQ
BRAZIL
CANADA

We want to document how people who have engaged with our materials and learned through our platform, while cooperating with each other and their communities, have collectively mobilized to address their challenges.

STORYTELLING DOCUMENTARY

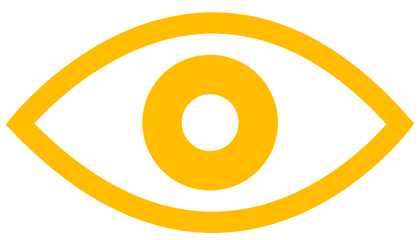
NEW LEARNING MATERIALS

CASE STUDIES

BLOGPOSTS

The documentation produced through this project will provide new learning materials for the further development of our curriculum, as well as materials that can be used by scholars, practitioners, and teachers. In particular, we will produce a set of ten new case studies, produced multilingually, which will provide new stories for mobilizers in training worldwide to learn from, and an hourlong, documentary-style video suitable for classroom use.

2020 VISION



The uOttawa Community Mobilization in Crisis project builds on the work accomplished throughout the past years to reach toward the implementation of a multi-layered program. Our long-term vision is to strengthen the bridge to higher education for displaced and marginalized students via social action, produce alternative professional development for social change, and create knowledge and power with communities through decolonized comparison.

We challenge the convention that programs bridging individuals to higher education reiterate a rigid academic curriculum as they prepare them for their degree programs. Instead, transformational education should cater to the potential of individuals becoming community oriented change makers, utilizing education as a tool to better service their communities. In addition to bridging, CMIC aims to provide a track towards alternative professional development for social change, addressed towards changing work practices especially with those in fields and professions in direct contact with communities – such as non-governmental (NGO) and civil society organizations. The alternative professional development track will tilt the existing power structure between organizations and communities in such a way that helps the professional better serve the community at hand by providing tools and training that give focus to the community's agency. The program creates knowledge and power with communities in a comparative way, by placing communities in the center of knowledge production and by securing communal ownership of that knowledge. Intellectually, we believe that decolonizing knowledge includes decolonizing the concept of 'comparison' as a tool of intellectual analysis. That means accepting that similarities may appear without implying identity, and that they may appear in unexpected places. Each of the projects, ideas, and people we work with is an individual, and their experience of working on community mobilization projects is their own--but by bringing together such a widely varying collection of places, people, and projects, we hope to find echoes and resonances among data that we might never have thought to compare.

Our vision is realized through the four pillars we set out to accomplish:

OPEN-ACCESS TRANSFORMATIVE RESOURCES

The open-access transformative resources will be made publicly available while they are steadily maintained and updated by the University of Ottawa. This low-cost maintenance continues to provide contextualization and polished materials to present to the mobilizers in training as well as to those who wish to access the resources.

CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

The resources will be part of the curriculum taught in the certificate program, along with the academic component, successfully bridging community leaders to higher education.

ALTERNATIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRACK

The alternative professional development track will run in parallel with the certificate program, focusing on best practices for professionals to implement in their work to better serve communities. The training-of-trainers models aims to spread a decolonized perspective of NGO work through the dissemination of changes in work practices on the ground.

INCUBATOR

The mobilizers-in-training from the Lebanon pilot felt that the course aimed to foster mobilization and social startups would not be enough if it were online only. The incubator will be an opportunity for the mobilizers in training who have completed the certificate program to launch their social startups. This next step will be available for those who meet the requirements and feel ready to begin their community mobilizations. While not an automatic next stage after the completion of the certificate program, the incubator will not be limited to a certain number in order to avoid fostering competitiveness among the mobilizers in training. Those not from the program will be eligible to join, space permitting, as long as they can demonstrate readiness and adequate preparation.

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