DESIGN FOR COMMUNITIES

D4C Annual report

2020-2021

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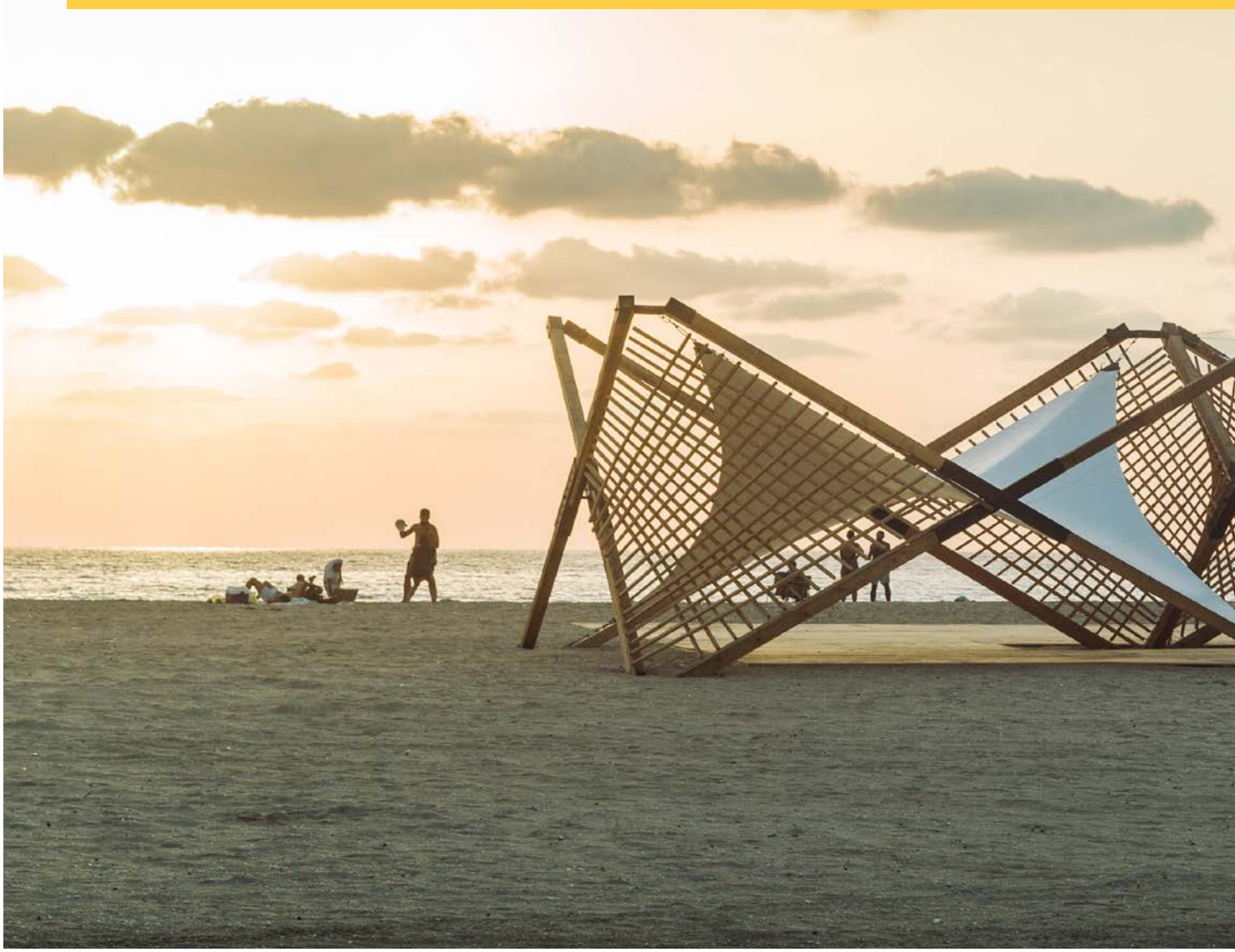

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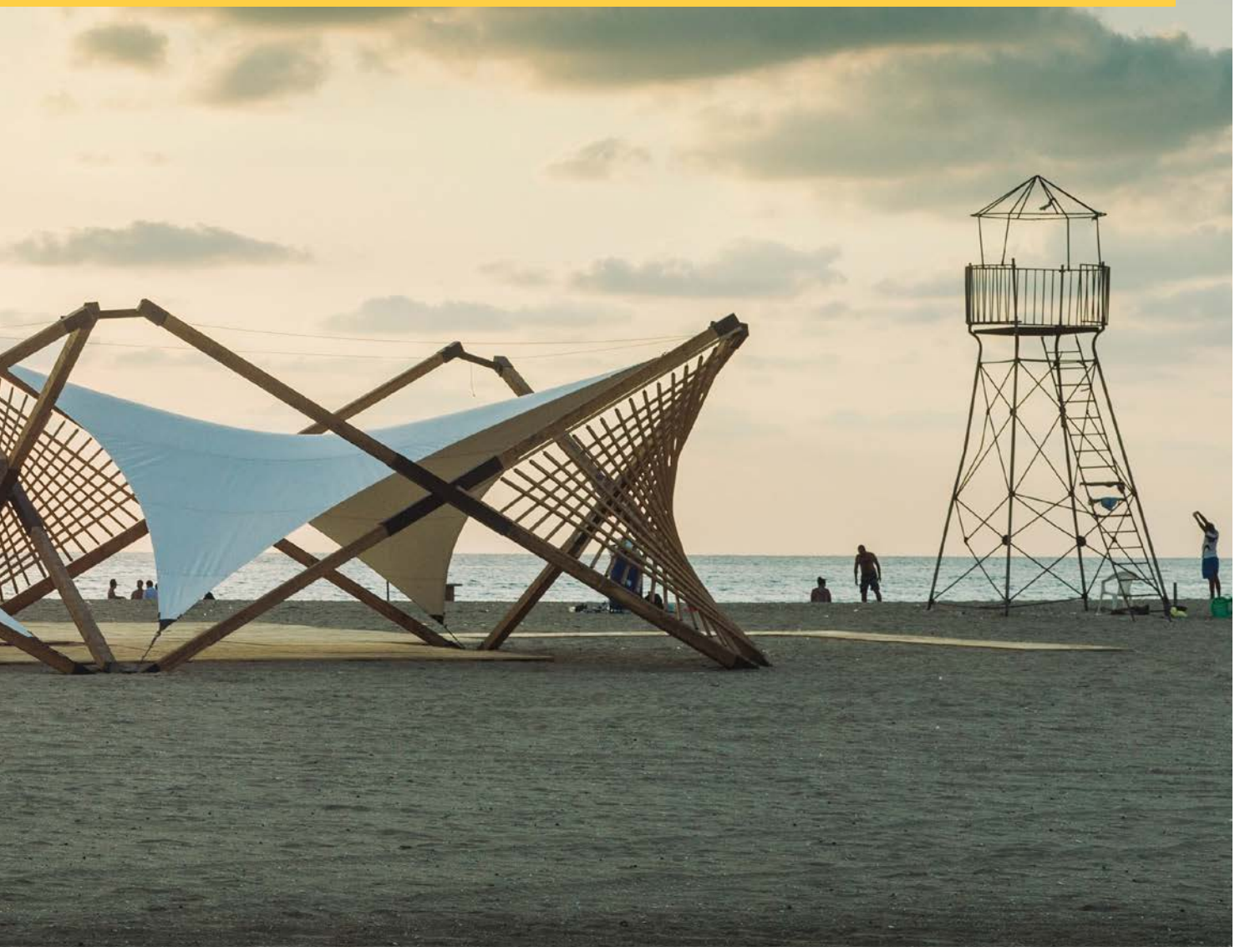


Foreword

Dear Friends, partners and D4C Community,

As we reach the end of 2021, this annual report is an opportunity to report on the progress we have made at D4C and share our 2022 goals and ambitions. But before listing our achievements, and as D4C was created to respond to the needs of the local communities through design solutions, here is a snapshot about the situation in Lebanon.

Since the blast on August 4 2020, many neighborhoods and houses have been rehabilitated, mainly by the tremendous efforts of our younger generation and the generous support from abroad. However, the effect of the blast on people's mental well-being is still strongly felt, even with all the psychosocial support programs offered by NGOs. Moreover, the situation is getting worse with the devaluation of the Lebanese currency, coupled with the fuel crisis and COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the latest studies, 60% of the population is living under the poverty line unable to cover their basic needs. Thus, young and skilled professionals are leaving the country to look for better opportunities to build their future while their country is in need of their competencies to recover.

On the other hand, you can still feel the resilience of the Lebanese community who is surviving with the least possible. They never give up, keeping the beautiful positive spirit and energy surrounding them. And this is where D4C is trying to interfere and make a difference to achieve a better sustainable future.

D4C's mission is to bring together the design community to actively collaborate and engage on innovative and sustainable projects for the local vulnerable communities. Building on the practice of the Di-Lab (Design Impact Laboratory) at the Department of Architecture and Design course at AUB, we are continuously engaging the design community in designing and implementing innovative and sustainable projects, inciting designers and architects to be civically engaged in serving their communities.

The implemented projects respond to the programmatic needs of the local communities while they reinforce the sense of ownership and belonging and strengthen the ties between the diverse groups of the local communities through their creative and engaging designs.

Since the Beirut Blast, we have increased our capacities by engaging 46 students and young professionals from the design community who developed projects based on our methodology of work; action oriented research and design, participatory approach and hands-on implementation. We set up strategic partnerships and have signed agreements with international and local agencies and consolidated our organizational structure.

As our vision is to have an impact driven design hub that empowers young people to be engaged in creating sustainable and innovative projects that serve the community, we are aiming to set up a hybrid educational and professional training program, where the design community can acquire knowledge and develop skills for community-based projects.

What we have achieved in 2021 has exceeded our expectations which led us to dream big. This would not have been possible without our donors' generous support. In 2022, we aim to increase our capacities and reach more vulnerable people.

Thank you!

Karim Najjar
President
Design for Communities

Sarah Rita Kattan
Executive Director
Design for Communities

How it all started ...

Design for Communities (D4C) was established based on a summer course/internship supported by a methodology course given within the framework of the Design Impact Laboratory (Di-Lab) at the American University of Beirut in the Architecture and Design department.

In 2016, Karim Najjar founded Di-Lab with the purpose of engaging architecture and engineering students and young professionals in research, design and implementation of grassroots projects in Lebanon and the MENA region. The focus of DI-Lab is on design innovation in the service of the public good. The lab offers credited courses as part of the architecture program curriculum, conducts workshops and pursues design research projects at the service of communities.

The lab was successful in providing a semi-professional setting where students collaborate with experts in the field and develop a hands-on approach to architecture, starting with assessing the needs of the communities surrounding a site, the design, development of construction documents and finally the execution of the project. Through this framework of courses, students have the opportunity to learn about the lifecycle of development and execution of architectural projects and develop a sense of civic engagement through a participatory approach that helps them design for the communities.

Thus, D4C designs, builds, educates and empowers young professionals and students from the design community, enabling them to learn about the professional world of architecture through a hands-on approach which bridges the gap between academia and the profession.

Many of the projects designed and executed in Di-Lab address rehabilitation of educational facilities such as the Barouk public school, the playtent in Kayany makeshift school for refugee girls in Bar Elias and the learning space in Kayany's school in Majdel Anjar.

All projects were designed based on a thorough research about innovative learning and playing modes followed by a close collaboration with various stakeholders and beneficiaries involved in the project. Other projects addressed public spaces and urban regeneration through intervention in cities, towns and villages such as Marah, in the Sour Nature reserve and Karm el Zeitoun in Beirut.

All the projects implemented aimed to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants and users through design, reinforcing the added value of design and innovation in humanitarian settings.

Building on this impactful course throughout the years which addressed both the needs of the design community and local communities, Design for Communities (D4C) was created in 2018 to be able to upscale the course, transforming it into a more sustainable, continuous and long-term program which empowers young people and professionals to work hand in hand towards building better societies.

It will also provide the opportunity for the non-AUB design community to learn and enjoy this experience. The design community, while developing their skills in design and construction and practicing its profession, will reinforce its role in implementing architectural projects that respond to the current realities in which our society lives, thinking ahead and developing solutions to support beneficiaries while maintaining their dignity and sense of identity.

After the Beirut Blast on August 4th 2020, we felt the need to be more responsive and active in the field, which encouraged us to partner with AUB and DI-Lab on projects that can address the needs and challenges our community is facing today within the multi-crisis Lebanon is passing through. Our technical expertise is based on our previous projects and experiences and closely linked to the AUB community and other NGOs. D4C provides as a solution a program that links both the academic, professional and humanitarian worlds by educating the design community to serve their locales with an impact driven hands-on approach.

"I started engaging at D4C as a volunteer when I was still a student. I gained ample experience in community-based projects, construction processes and learned how the architectural profession could actually serve the community. As a board member, I would like to ensure today more young people can benefit from this opportunity."

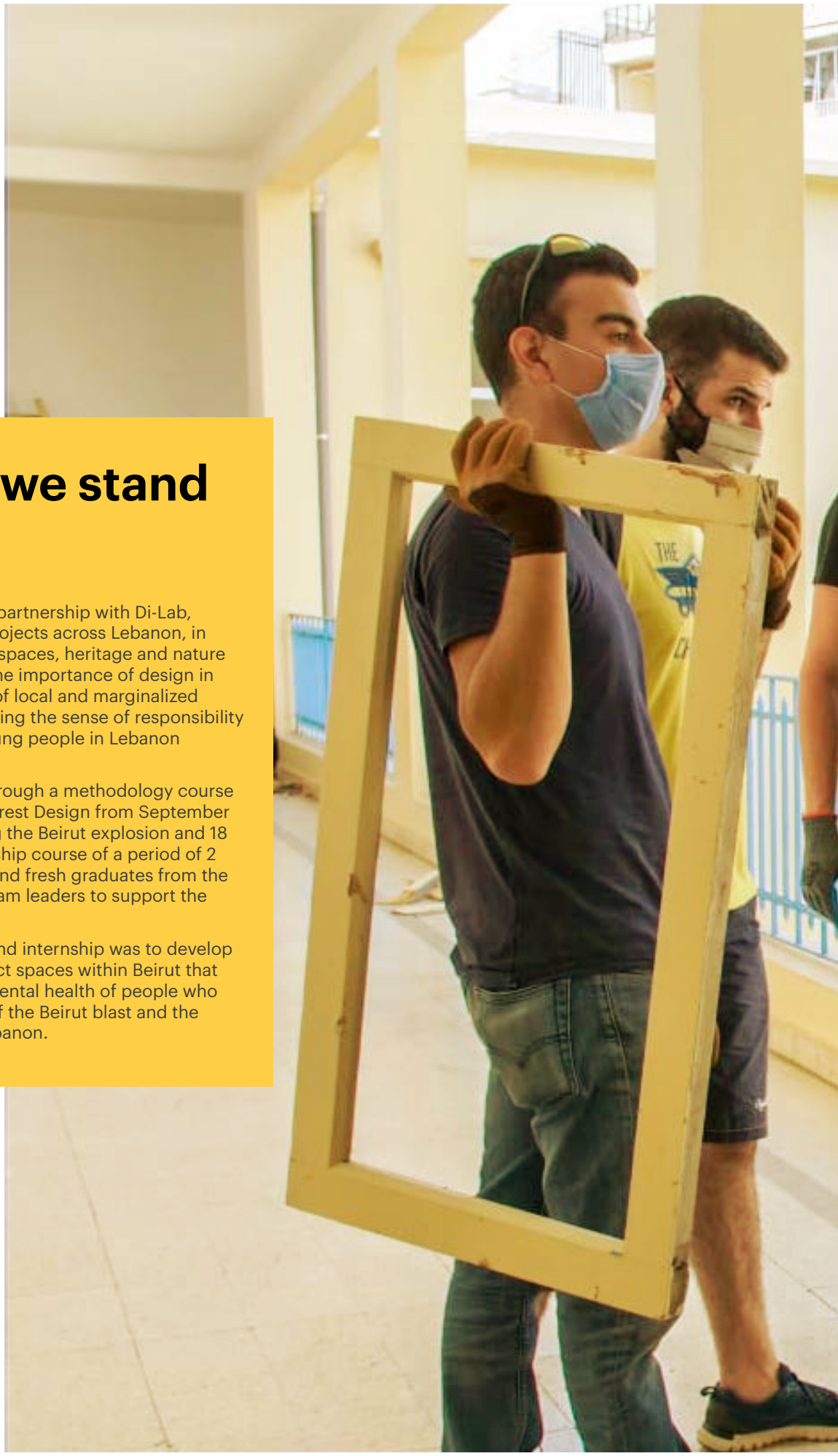
Mohammad Nazar
Board member, Treasurer

Where do we stand today?

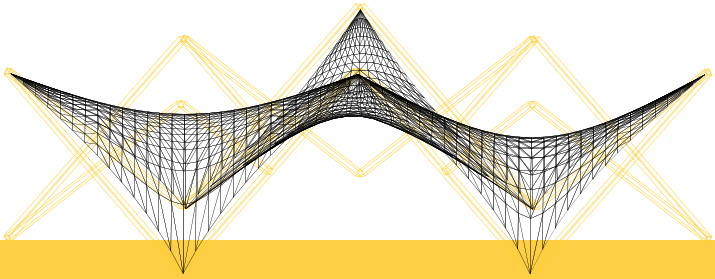
Over the past years, D4C, in partnership with Di-Lab, implemented a number of projects across Lebanon, in educational facilities, public spaces, heritage and nature reserves which showcased the importance of design in improving the quality of life of local and marginalized communities and strengthening the sense of responsibility and civic engagement of young people in Lebanon towards their communities.

D4C engaged 16 students through a methodology course given within AUB: Public Interest Design from September to December 2020, following the Beirut explosion and 18 students in a summer internship course of a period of 2 months where 7 volunteers and fresh graduates from the D4C community joined as team leaders to support the students in their work.

The purpose of this course and internship was to develop project proposals to construct spaces within Beirut that support the livelihood and mental health of people who became in need as a result of the Beirut blast and the current circumstances in Lebanon.



2020-2021



46
volunteers/designers

3
completed projects

2
ongoing projects

5
proposals

100K Euros
managed projects

11,495
design hours donated

Community-based Projects

Community-based projects undertaken in 2020 and 2021 consisted of developing project proposals and prototypes such as:

Mapping and Identifying Possible Interventions

Students and volunteers mapped the needs of the community in the affected areas of Beirut and identified points and interventions to support the community affected by the blast depending on initiatives undertaken by NGOs and individuals. All members and volunteers were engaged with the NGOs, beneficiaries and stakeholders in a participatory approach and contributed fully to the concept, development and execution of the prototypes.

Farmers' Market in Taanayel

The farmers' market in Domaine de Taanayel was redesigned based on a needs assessment and discussions with the farmers who sell their products in the market (Beit el Mouzere3) that is operated by arc-en-ciel. A portable market stall was designed and a 1 to 1 prototype was constructed to allow for more display and storage areas for farmers, as well as to create an easily portable stall that can have an individual identity. The prototype will be developed as a modular structure according to the availability of funds.

In partnership with arc-en-ciel

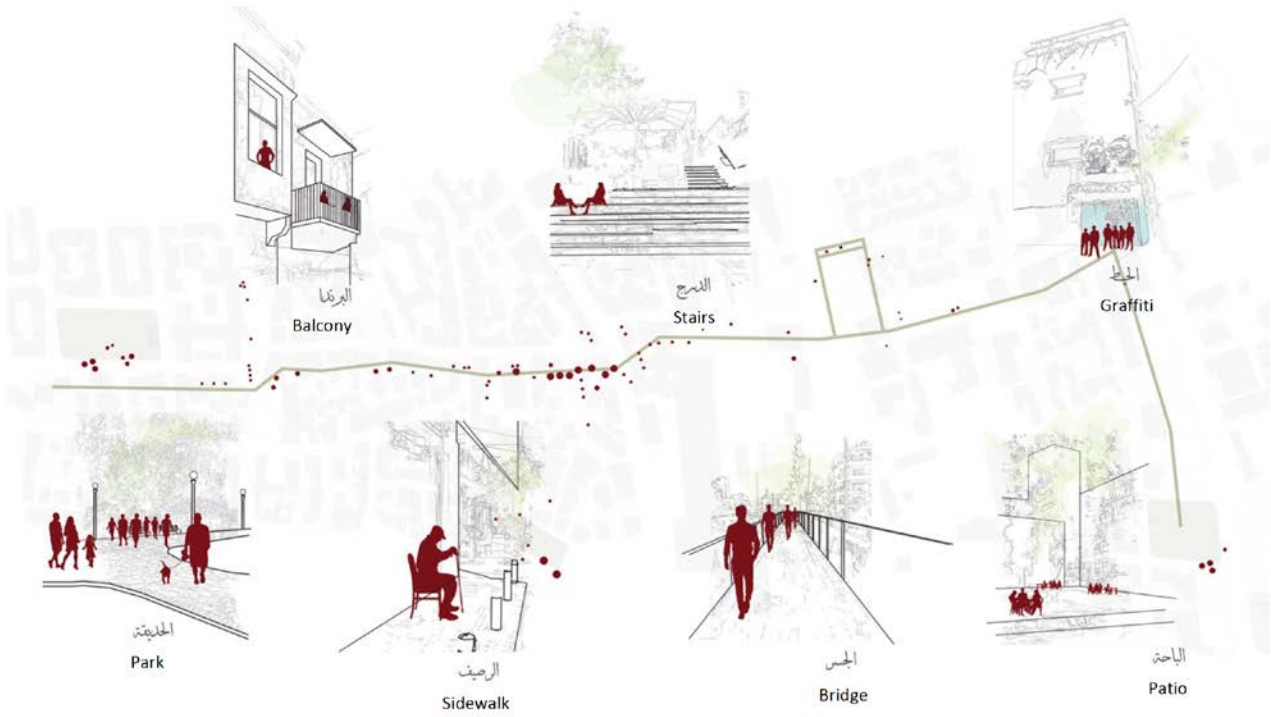
arcenciel.org
engage in development

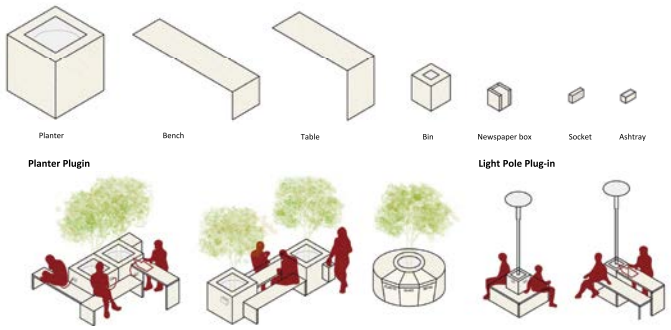
Urban Farming on Roofs

Building on the Fay initiative of arc-en-ciel, the roof of arc-en-ciel's office building in Jisr el Basha was redesigned to ensure a healthy work environment and a hangout space to encourage employees and beneficiaries to grow their own vegetables and plants. A 1 to 1 scale prototype for a communal urban farming unit was built, allowing for a sitting and gathering area and planting pots with a water recycling system which is tested for optimization and improvement. The project is also to be adapted and implemented in an urban garden in Chiyah in collaboration with the Chiyah Municipality and the surrounding community.

In partnership with arc-en-ciel

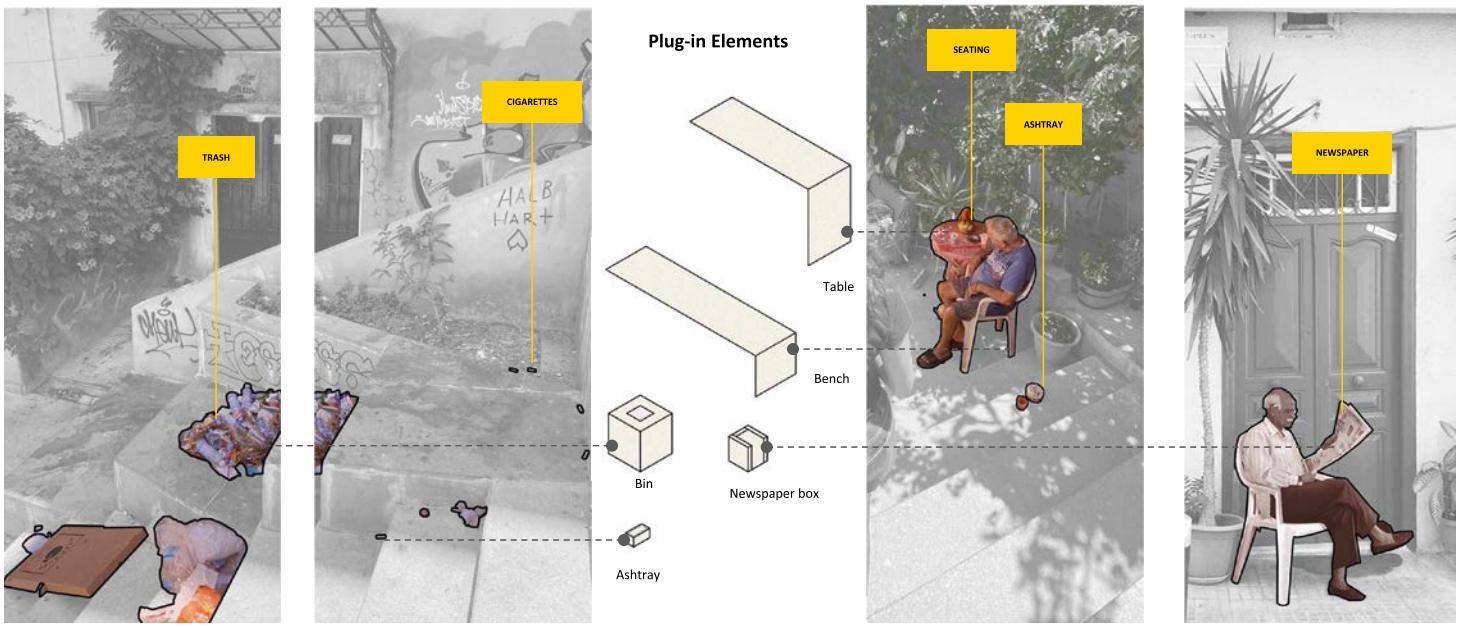
arcenciel.org
engage in development

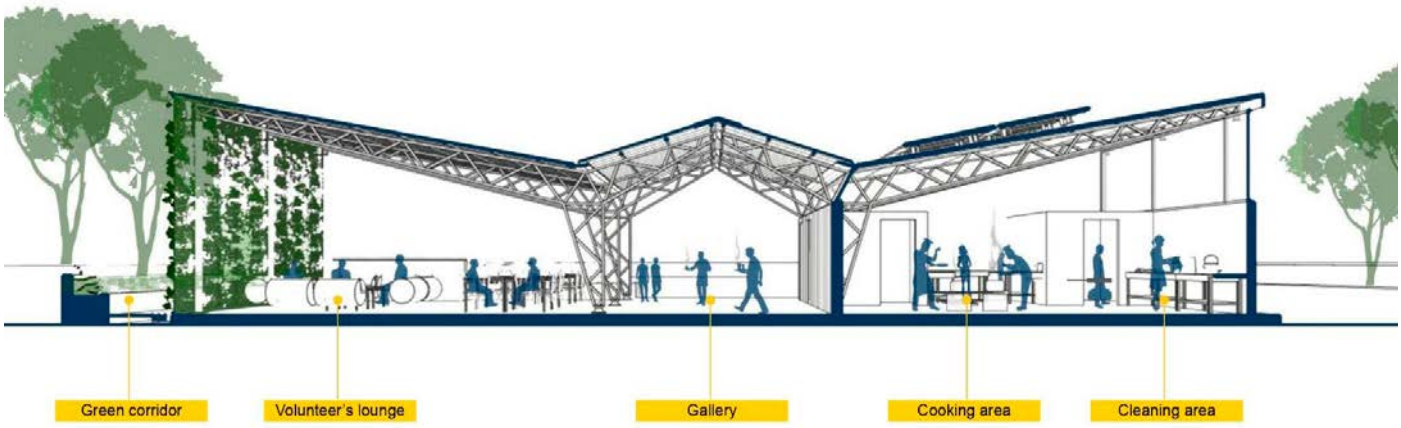




Urban Corridors in Beirut

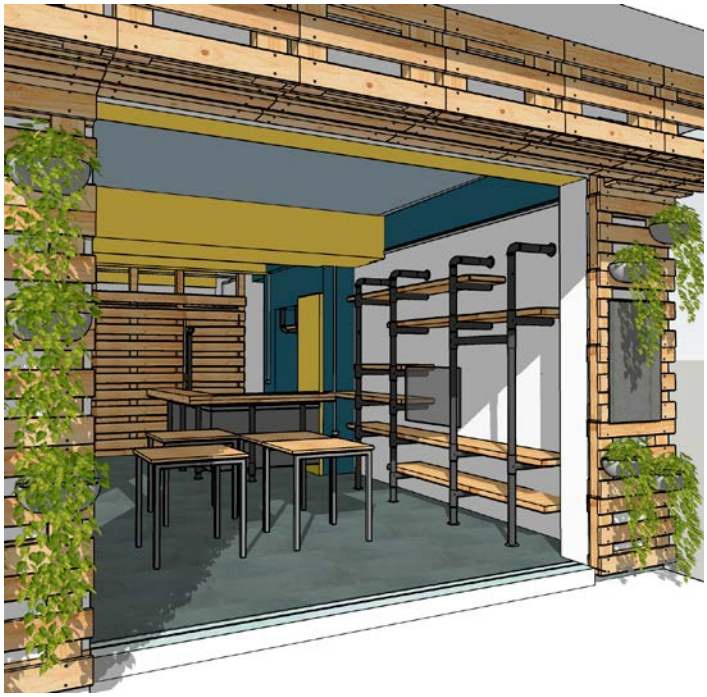
Following a thorough mapping of the Rmeil and Karantina areas and the social practices of the inhabitants, a concept for reviving an urban corridor and creating public spaces that link the segregated neighborhoods of Rmeil and Karantina was developed.





Leqmet Mariam Industrial Kitchen

To optimize the service of the NGO Jouzourna that was delivering 700 meals daily in Karantina from a makeshift soup kitchen, an industrial kitchen in Rmeil was designed to provide food for the neighborhoods of Karantina, Rmeil and adjacent areas. The modular structure allows for extending the space as needed and revolves around a courtyard which allows for other complementary activities to be hosted as well.



Crossing Together

'Crossing Together' community center was established in partnership with the Roman Catholic Apostolic Vicariate in Lebanon as a pilot project in the heart of Rmeil, one of Beirut's most affected neighborhoods by Beirut Blast. The center is set in a former food market shop that was destroyed and abandoned after the blast. Reaching out to 1000 families, 'Crossing Together' has become a hub providing food supplies, psychological and emotional support to the elderly and traumatized individuals, assistance to persons who suffer from inequalities and violence, particularly women and children, educational activities and medical assistance in partnership with Caritas. The design of the place follows the strong belief that spatial qualities of an environment are key to the healing process. It puts human well-being and dignity at its core aiming to drive forward a sustainable recovery of the Rmeil neighborhood.

Crossing together is a gathering space where people from different generations, particularly the elderly, are able to connect and support each other in a welcoming hub that would restore their dignity and strengthen the bonds of the community. The project was developed through a participatory approach where beneficiaries, operators, students and volunteers from D4C were involved in the full process of the design, development and execution of the project. A report on the impact and successful implementation of the project is being developed now to showcase the importance of creating such spaces in the community.

In partnership with the Roman Catholic Apostolic Vicariate

Nafas
Community Center

Funded by La Guilde and Cités Unies Liban, an abandoned warehouse on a municipal lot is to be rehabilitated as a community center in Karantina following a participatory approach involving the community of Karantina. NGOs will operate and provide programs in the space itself that would benefit the inhabitants of the area. The purpose of this community center is to create a space that joins people from various backgrounds together, creating a sense of identity and belonging and restoring the dignity of the people affected by the blast and the current difficulties in the country. The space will provide activities and programs related to psychosocial support, food distribution, skills upgrade workshops such as provision making and skills for life.

Nafas will be a hub that hosts various NGOs delivering programs for the community depending on a periodic assessment of needs and managed in collaboration with an advisory community committee that includes representatives of the various neighborhoods of Karantina, the municipality, D4C, BUL and the operating NGO.

The project was funded with USD 60,000 and the final permits are being secured from Beirut Municipality. The following phases include developing the construction documents and the execution of the structures.

“Nafas” will be an example of how collaboration and partnerships between the public, humanitarian and academic sector can lead to the creation of a dynamic relief hub, safe and empowering for people facing difficulties to connect and support each other, build a network of solidarity and improve the social cohesion of a scattered community.

In partnership with Beirut Urban Lab and Beirut Municipality

Organizational Development

Partnering with other NGOs

Potential partnerships were identified to ensure the feasibility of the projects from a construction and programmatic perspective. D4C signed MoUs with various NGOs such as Live Love Beirut, arc-en-ciel, Beirut Urban Lab and Jouzourouna who can take an operational roles in the implementation of those projects.

Fundraising for projects

D4C applied for grants to be able to implement the project proposals developed throughout the year and was awarded grants from La Guilde, Cités Unies Liban and private donors for specific projects.

Organizational structure

In addition, we consolidated our organizational structure through joining NGOi, an initiative of the American University of Beirut that provides different services to the NGO sector in Lebanon and the MENA region.

D4C went through a self-assessment that positions NGOs within the NGOi network, we identified our strengths and weaknesses, developed policies and procedures for human resources, finances and procurement. We formulated our code of conduct and developed a strategic plan with the support of an external facilitator. With a clear mission and vision, we set the objectives and activities for each of our strategic priorities, while KPIs are to be developed in the first quarter of 2022.

In line with our strategic plan and in accordance with recruitment procedures, two new staff members joined the team: one member to support us in grant writing and partnerships and another for administrative and financial tasks. After collecting various offers for auditing purposes, we selected one accredited auditor to audit our financial years: 2020 and 2021.

AGENDA
Introduction & Opening
PESTEL & SWOT

Where do we see ourselves in the future?

As Lebanon is going through challenging times, we see these years as an opportunity to be able to give back to our communities through architectural and design interventions. Changing paradigms in relation to the added value of design in humanitarian settings.

Based on a PESTEL and SWOT analysis, we set the strategic priorities, identified objectives, internal challenges, stakeholders and our organizational chart.

In conclusion and after various consultation with an external facilitator, the vision and mission of D4C are as follow:

Vision

to have an impact driven design hub that develops innovative sustainable community-based programs and projects.

Mission

to bring together the design community to actively collaborate, engage, learn and implement innovative and sustainable projects to improve the quality of life of the local communities.

Approach

LEARN

ENGAGE

DO

INSPIRE

D4C continuously engages the design community in designing and implementing innovative and sustainable projects, inciting designers and architects to be civically engaged in serving their communities. Our projects aim to create spaces that respond to the pragmatic needs of the local communities, who will receive the required support in a dignified space that was designed in partnership with them. This reinforces the sense of ownership and belonging and strengthens the ties between the diverse groups of the Lebanese people.

We strive to empower young people to be engaged in creating sustainable and innovative projects that serve the community. We aim to set up a hybrid educational and professional training program, where the design community can acquire knowledge and develop skills for community-based projects. We believe that this will not only serve young professional architects and engineers who can't find jobs, but also increase our capacities to reach out to a broader community in need.

Values

RESPONSIBILITY

INTEGRITY

INCLUSIVITY

INSPIRATION

LEARNING

We aim to contribute to many of the Sustainable Development Goals defined by the UN 2030 Agenda including: SDG3 good health and wellbeing, SDG4 quality education, SDG7 affordable and clean energy, SDG10 reduced inequalities, SDG11 sustainable cities and communities and SDG17 partnerships for the goals.

What do we aim to achieve?

Our strategy

In order to reach our vision, we identified these strategic priorities:

SP 1: Organizational structure

Organizational development of the NGO in terms of human resources, financial and administrative practices, M&E and the implementation of the strategic plan to achieve D4C's vision.

O1: Reinforce the organizational structure and the human resource department

O2: Establish sustainable financial practices

O3: Develop and implement a strategic plan to achieve D4C's vision

O4: Develop and implement a monitoring and evaluation strategy

'' By implementing a strong organizational development process, D4C will be more effective in accomplishing its desired goals. Especially when focusing on developing the structures, systems, and processes within the organization. Our Organizational Development process aims at creating a behaviorally healthy organization that will naturally cope with internal and external changes. ''

Sabine Karam
Administration and finance

SP2: Partnerships

Partnerships that can increase the impact and exposure of D4C in the public sector, NGOs and academia and diversify its funding.

O1: Increase the impact of D4C through developing strategic partnerships with stakeholders who can contribute to our mission

O2: Position D4C in education and innovative and sustainable designs within the public sector, NGOs and academia

O3: Diversify the funding sources of D4C through strategic partnerships and donors

"Approaches to solving development challenges through partnerships between public, private and nongovernmental organizations achieves better impact and sustainability towards serving communities. Building true partnerships with common objectives and goals that share risks and rewards, creates more collaborative, efficient and impactful solutions to the emerging crisis and challenges."

Farah Abi Mosleh
Grants and partnerships

SP3: Educational programs

Internship platform complemented by educational training opportunities for students and young professionals about topics related to community-based and sustainable design to support their hands-on experience.

O1: Provide an internship platform for students and young professionals to get a hands on experience in architecture for the community

O2: Provide educational training opportunities for students and professionals that address topics related to community-based and sustainable design

"We intend to take the crisis as an opportunity to educate, train, and build capacities of socially conscious architects in the field of community design."

Karim Najjar
President

SP4: Community-based projects

Design proposals and interventions developed and implemented in partnership with local communities, authorities and NGOs based on a systematic assessment of needs.

O1: Conduct a systemic assessment of needs for community based projects in partnership with NGOs and the local communities

O2: Develop feasible design and project proposals for architectural interventions that respond to the community needs as per the assessment

O3: Implement and build design projects in partnership with the community, NGOs and local authorities

O4: Report on the impact of the implemented projects

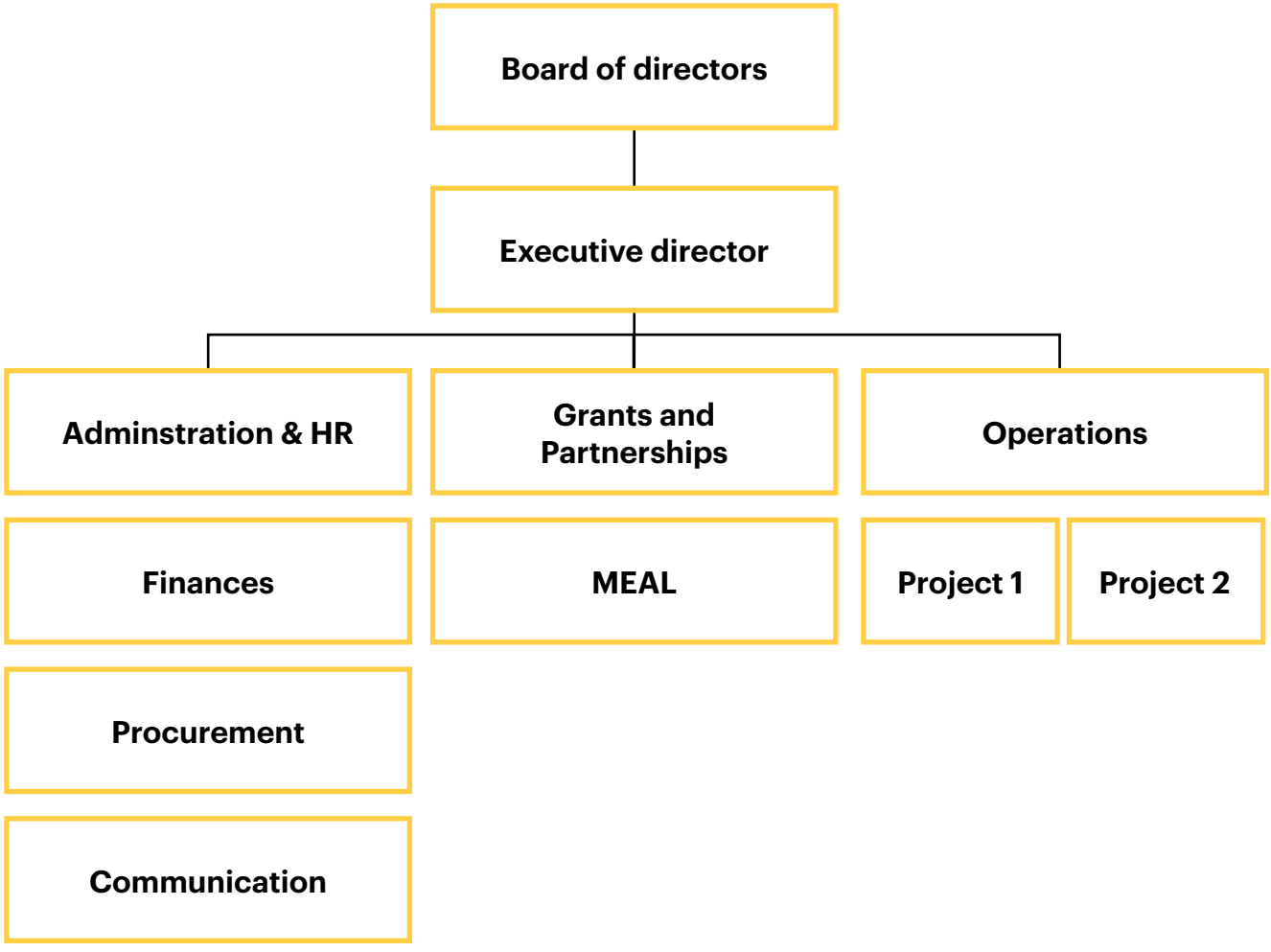
"We believe that projects implemented in a hybrid setting, combining design education, practice and community engagement are crucial in our mission towards excellence in professional development at the service of the local community."

Sarah Rita Kattan
Executive director

How do we want to get there?

As we are still reinforcing our internal structure to be able to expand and develop more in the future, we set our organizational structure as follows and develop the role and responsibilities of each of the positions.

Organizational structure



Delivering and reporting on our plan

In order to deliver on our strategic plan, every team member within D4C is contributing to the strategic priority that they are mostly focusing on in their position. This will lead to developing the D4C theory of change that summarizes the strategic plan work. Thus, we will be able to create D4C programs and logical frameworks that will be adopted per project. In addition,following the expertise and knowledge of each member, we conduct weekly meetings to coordinate and monitor the work done in each task.

We aim to ensure a sustainable organizational structure and to support our activities through fundraising and partnerships and to be more visible on media platforms.

Biannual Reports will be delivered to the board of directors, as well as to donors, partners and communities to make sure all stakeholders involved in D4C are informed regularly and can contribute in different instances in making D4C's journey a success.

In 2022, we will continue to engage with our long-time supporters while attracting new and non-traditional funders to grow and diversify our donor base.

We aim to secure new donors and to significantly increase unrestricted, multi-year funding for our core operations in order to pursue our mission in empowering young people to be actively engaged in serving their communities through their professional practice: design.

DESIGN FOR COMMUNITIES

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