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## The Community Support Program (CSP) in Lebanon

September 2022 Newsletter

### Jurd el Qaita Union of Municipalities Extinguishes Wildfire with CSP-Provided Equipment

Located in the mountainous forested area of Akkar, the Jurd el Qaita Union of Municipalities is composed of fifteen towns and villages, home to about 130,000 Lebanese residents and 4,000 Syrian refugees. The union experiences recurring wildfires which have been exacerbated by weak municipal response mechanisms. As a result, tourism has been severely affected in the area, which significantly reduced local economic opportunities and increased tensions among residents over limited livelihoods. Back in December 2021, CSP supported the union to better respond to the wildfires by providing its fire truck, which was self-funded by the union despite the economic crisis, with necessary fire response equipment to be used by the union's recently established volunteer first responders' team. The equipment included a water pump and thrusters, a fire-resistant water hose and tank, as well as fire hammers, extinguishers, and resistant gloves, among others.

On the morning of August 8, 2022, a wildfire erupted in the village of Qaita which threatened to expand to three other villages. Thankfully, the disaster was successfully mitigated by 83 volunteers from the union's first responders' team who made use of the equipment provided by CSP, enabling them to rapidly extinguish the fire before it spread.



*Jurd el Qaita Union of Municipalities' fire response members, and other first responders make use of CSP-provided fire equipment to effectively extinguish the forest fire and prevent its spread to other villages in the area.*

## US Ambassador and USAID Mission Director to Lebanon Visit CSP's Partner TVET in Tripoli



*Group photo following the visit to Tamkeen Vocational Institute, featuring (from left to right) Director of Tamkeen and other representatives from the institute's administration, CSP Chief of Party, CSP Workforce Development Director, Workforce Development Contracting Officer, US Ambassador to Lebanon, Workforce Development Scholarship Director, and USAID Mission Director.*

On August 3, 2022, CSP's Partner Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Institute, Tamkeen, hosted a visit by the U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon, USAID/ Lebanon's Mission Directory, and USAID/Lebanon's Economic Growth Office Director in Tripoli, North Lebanon. The visit included showcasing the impact of USAID's investment in workforce development. As part of a 3.5-year pilot program, CSP is providing scholarship and internship opportunities to students from vulnerable backgrounds, whilst improving technical and vocational curricula in promising sectors and strengthening TVETs' organizational and financial management via capacity building and in-kind donation of equipment. The visit also included meeting scholarship recipients who were taking part in vocational courses in IT (Data Science and Cyber Security) and Repair and Maintenance of Industrial Machinery. Upon completion of these courses, USAID will support the students in getting enrolled in internships and later in finding stable employment.



Bouchra Bahrei  
USAID - Jobs Education  
Training scholarship recipient

Meet Bouchra! One of six female scholarship recipients challenging gender bias at Tamkeen by enrolling in the Repair and Maintenance course. By gaining vital skills to enter this strongly male-dominated sector, these women are taking a big step forward in shifting perceptions of gender stereotypes in Lebanon.

"I feel that by proving many people wrong by succeeding in this course, other women will hopefully take a step forward in this sector too"

## Saidoun Agricultural Cooperative Attracts 400 Visitors to its First Farmer's Market



*Around 400 visitors attended the Saidoun cooperative's first agricultural market - August 12-13, 2022.*

Farming communities in Lebanon have been particularly affected by the exacerbation of the socio-economic crisis, especially as they have been facing rising costs of production coupled with diminished incomes. Nestled in the green hills of the Jezzine District in South Lebanon, the Saidoun cluster of agricultural villages is far from being an exception. In this remote area, the majority of residents have long relied on agriculture for their livelihoods, namely through the cultivation of olives, vegetables, thyme, aromatic plants, and the processing of local products into mouneh (preserved foods). However, amidst the ongoing deterioration of living conditions in Lebanon, unemployment in the area stands at around 60%, as many farmers, unable to afford to cultivate their plots, were forced to abandon their land. In response, USAID's CSP provided the local agricultural cooperative with five rotary tillers, two trailers, nine mechanical pruning shears, six mechanical olive harvesters, and other needed equipment to enhance the efficiency and decrease production costs for 120 farming households. In parallel, CSP has been training the members of the cooperative on the equipment's operation and maintenance, safety and storage, as well as on strategies to better market their products to sustainably improve local incomes. Making use of their newly acquired social media skills and digital tools, on August 12 and 13, 2022, the cooperative held its first agricultural market in Saidoun, which attracted some 400 visitors and promoted the goods of 12 vendors.

“ Thanks to the support from USAID/CSP, we were able to promote local farmers' products and maximize their sales. We were also able to encourage the rental of CSP-provided equipment ahead of the upcoming harvest season ”

**Charbel Khawand, Head of Saidoun Agricultural Cooperative**



[Click here to watch a video on CSP's intervention in Saidoun](#)

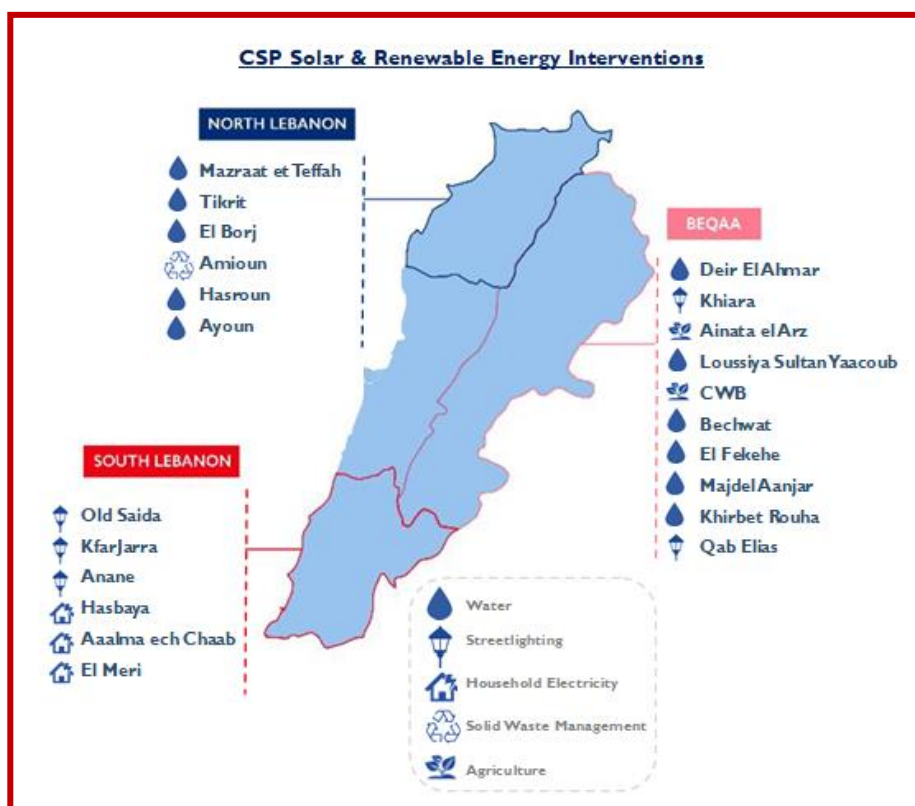
## CSP Ramps up Implementation of Solar Solutions to Enhance Residents' Access to Essential Services

As life without electricity in Lebanon continues to aggravate living conditions across the country, USAID's CSP is achieving significant progress in its implementation of sustainable solar solutions to counter the collapse of essential services in underserved localities. By early September 2022, CSP had successfully completed the installation of solar farms in Hasbaya (South Lebanon) to hybridize the town's backup electricity system, which will enhance access to electricity for an estimated 8,700 residents. Similarly, in Majdel Aanjar (Beqaa), CSP finalized the installation of a solar farm to upgrade the town's water pumping system to improve access to water for around 19,000 beneficiaries. Meanwhile, CSP continued to move forward in implementing its remaining solar interventions across Lebanon totalling 22 projects that aim to enhance services such as access to water, streetlighting, household electricity, solid waste management, and agricultural production.



“ This intervention by USAID/CSP will alleviate the financial burdens on both the municipality and households by relying on alternative energy ”

Labib El Hamra, Mayor of Hasbaya



## CSP's Labor-Intensive Works in Akkar Increase Local Resilience to Wildfires and Provide Needed Income for 500 Lebanese Residents

Between 2020 and 2021, wildfires destroyed more than 3000 hectares of forested land in Akkar Governorate alone, which has fueled longstanding tensions and sectarian divisions in the area. Located at the most northern point of Lebanon, the fires are compounded by the country's ongoing economic crisis and soaring unemployment rates. This month, USAID's CSP started implementing a range of short-term income-generating Labor-Intensive Work (LIW) activities to clear forests in three of the region's worst affected villages by wildfires: Qbaiyat, Akroum and Aandqet. Overall, these activities are providing 500 local Lebanese residents with much needed income whilst sustainably mitigating the risk of forest fires in the area.

**This month, we invite you to meet some of the people CSP is supporting through these Labor-Intensive Works**



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"The fires devastate our lands every year and brave members of our community have to risk their lives to put them out. It's much better to prevent them from starting in the first place. We have hope that tomorrow will be better."

**Georgina Khoury:**  
Labor-Intensive Worker  
in Qbaiyat


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### **Georgina Khoury, 53**

My husband is a retired soldier, but because of the inflation in Lebanon, his pension has been reduced to just \$40 per month. That is why we have to work and be strong for our families' sake. My son is studying electricity at a technical school, but due to the multifaceted crises in the country, there are very few job opportunities for him. He is truly gifted and I am working hard to ensure he has a bright future ahead of him. Mothers are hidden warriors, but it's very difficult for us these days. This project is relieving some of our hardship while keeping our dignity.

### **Ahmad Abdel Khader, 29**

I am married with three young children: two boys and a girl, who are three and seven years old, and the youngest is 18 months. Living expenses and inflation keep rising, and there are very few income opportunities for us. After the fires last year, people were illegally chopping down trees to sell wood. We love our nature here and we don't want that, but it is understandable that people from the community would resort to these practices. However, it is important for us to maintain our forest.





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"Our community is passionate about our beautiful environment. The forest here is a natural treasure to us. If wildfires continues, we will lose it all. Thanks to USAID, this is the first time in 30 years that people are taking care of it."

**Ahmad Abdel Khader, 29**  
Labor-Intensive Worker  
in Akroum

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“Last year’s forest fires came right up to our house, but thankfully they did not destroy it. It was terrifying. This project will help reduce the chances of this happening again and devastating our forests and community.”

Gaelle Abboud, 24  
Labor-Intensive Worker  
in Qbaiyat

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### Gaelle Abboud, 24

Although I graduated over two years ago, I haven’t been able to find a job. It isn’t easy for young people here; there are too few economic opportunities for us. My father is a retired soldier and now works as a farmer, but neither his pension nor his income is enough to provide for the family. Thanks to this project, I will be able to support my parents and younger siblings during these difficult times.

### Michel, 29

Since 2019, life has been very difficult for us. Lebanon is a very centralized country, and remote locations suffer a lot. Akkar is far from Beirut, and we are close to Syria. There used to be a lot more opportunities in tourism for young people, but few visit this area since the start of the Syrian war. There are very few projects here and, although it isn’t completely resolving the impact of the crisis, this work is helping us overcome some of the difficulties during these times. We hope that this project will help avoid another catastrophe such as the one we experienced last year with the fires.




“Our community is at the periphery of the country, and this project is really important to young people here for whom there are too few economic opportunities”

Michel, 29  
Labor-Intensive Worker  
in Qbaiyat

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