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## COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROGRAM (CSP) IN LEBANON

NEWSLETTER

October 2023

### CSP Celebrates Completing the Rehabilitation of the Aaitanit Wastewater Treatment Plant to Benefit More than 23,700 Residents

On September 14, 2023, USAID's Community Support Program (CSP), celebrated the completion of the rehabilitation of the Aaitanit Wastewater Treatment Plant in the Beqaa. In partnership with the Beqaa Water Establishment (BWE) and the Bouhaira Union of Municipalities, this \$1.5 million intervention treats water for the villages of Aaitanit, Baaloul, Qaraoun, and Machghara, reaching more than 23,700 residents. The ribbon-cutting ceremony was attended by the Minister of Energy and Water, Dr. Walid Fayyad, Minister of Environment, Dr. Nasser Yassin, USAID Mission Director to Lebanon, Julie Southfield, Acting Director General of the BWE, President of Bouhaira Union of Municipalities, and mayors of the benefiting villages.

The Aaitanit wastewater treatment plant was originally constructed with USAID funding from 2007-2009 and started operating in 2010. Operated by the Bouhaira Union of Municipalities and the Beqaa Water Establishment (BWE), this facility is one of the few wastewater treatment plants that has continued to operate in Lebanon despite the lack of state financial resources allocated to the wastewater sector amidst the nation's economic crisis. In 2020, USAID continued its support to the plant through CSP by rehabilitating its ageing equipment, installing new pumps, screens, and electro-mechanical systems, and upgrading its sludge management system by constructing a new building for the thickening and dewatering equipment. CSP also equipped the plant with a modern wastewater laboratory to analyze samples and monitor the treatment process. Additionally, USAID is funding the operation and maintenance of the plant until the end of 2024, while building the capacities of technicians from the BWE and the Bouhaira Union of Municipalities to operate and sustain it.

In addition to enabling the facility to operate at its full capacity, this intervention has also reduced wastewater sludge volume by 95% and prevented raw sewage from overflowing into the Litani river, while promoting public and environmental health and enhancing the area's potential for tourism and economic development.



**Above:** Ribbon cutting ceremony - from left to right: Head of Bouhaira Union of Municipalities Yehya Daher, Minister of Energy and Water Walid Fayyad, USAID Mission Director to Lebanon Julie Southfield, Minister of Environment Nasser Yassin, Mayor of Aaitanit Assaad Naje. **Below:** Technical tour of the newly rehabilitated Aaitanit wastewater treatment plant – Sep 2023



[Click here for a video on CSP's intervention at the Aaitanit wastewater treatment plant](#)

# CSP Launches Intervention in Partnership with Arcenciel to Provide Temporary Economic Support to 130 Lebanese People with Disabilities



## INCLUSION POWERS INNOVATION

NATIONAL  
DISABILITY  
EMPLOYMENT  
AWARENESS MONTH

The ongoing economic crisis that hit Lebanon in 2019, worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Beirut Port explosion in August of 2020, plunged 80% of residents into poverty, led to widespread unemployment, and limited access to necessities for a significant portion of the population. Specifically, people with disabilities are considered among the most disadvantaged groups in Lebanon, with unemployment rates estimated at 85% in 2020 by the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. With the Government of Lebanon unable to address disability inclusion, people with disabilities are at high risk of basic rights deprivation. In response, USAID's Community Support Program (CSP), in partnership with local NGO, Arcenciel, is providing 130 people with disabilities across Lebanon with part-time income-generating opportunities over a three-month period at private sector partner businesses, USAID implementing partners, or at Arcenciel centers. Each person will receive \$12/day in wages throughout their temporary employment, while gaining unique skills, talents, and expertise that can contribute significantly to their personal development, allowing employers to focus on their ability instead of disabilities.

On October 4, 2023, CSP and Arcenciel officially launched this activity and started outreach preparations to identify 130 people with disabilities and start placing them in part-time jobs no later than December 2023. This activity not only enhances the livelihoods of marginalized groups, but it is also in line with National Disability Employment Awareness month in the U.S., which takes place each October to encourage employers to embrace diversity, create inclusive environments, and demonstrate their commitment to social responsibility and equality.

**“By empowering people with disabilities through income-generating opportunities, we are not only providing economic assistance, but we are unlocking potentials, breaking down stigmas about their abilities to perform, and highlighting that disability is never a barrier to independency, self-sufficiency and working ability.”**

*Laudy Hakim, Employment Program Manager at Arcenciel*

## USAID Assistance Enables Jurd el Qaitea's First Responders Team to Extinguish 16 Forest Fires in Akkar



[Click here for a video on CSP's fire prevention intervention in Jurd el Qaitea](#)

*Jurd el Qaitea's first responders' team utilizes USAID/CSP provided firefighting equipment to combat wildfires in Akkar – July 2023*

Located in the mountainous forested region of North Lebanon, the Jurd el Qaitea Union of Municipalities is composed of fifteen towns and villages, home to around 130,000 Lebanese residents and 4,000 Syrian refugees. The union struggles with recurring wildfires, which have been exacerbated by weak municipal response mechanisms and climate change. This has severely affected tourism in the area, which in turn has significantly reduced local economic opportunities and increased tensions among residents over limited livelihoods. In response, in November 2021, USAID's Community Support Program (CSP) supported the union to better respond to the wildfires by providing its fire truck with necessary fire response equipment including a water pump and thrusters, a fire-resistant water hose and tank, fire hammers, extinguishers, protective gear, and handheld transceivers to facilitate coordination within the union's recently established volunteer first responders' team during response operations. Additionally, CSP trained the first responders' team on the operation and maintenance of the provided equipment, as well as on victim rescue techniques and safety through live fire drills. This summer season, and amidst an unprecedented heatwave, using the USAID-funded equipment and training, the Jurd el Qaitea first responders team successfully extinguished 16 forest fires, contributing to the preservation of the area's natural resources and to a 97% decrease of burnt forest areas in North Lebanon.

**"The first responders team are the first defenders of green and forest areas; they are also an example of the successful partnership between the community, the government, and donor agencies, especially USAID, which is effectively supporting local efforts in succeeding to reduce burnt forest areas by more than 90% in three years."**

*Minister of Environment, Nasser Yassin, at the national conference for specialists in forest firefighters and crisis response, organized by SALAR International in Aug 2023*

## CSP Enhances Food Security in the Beqaa by Supporting a Nursery to Produce 1.2 million Seedlings for Local Farmers in 2023



The villages of Aarsal, El Laboue, En Nabi Osmane, Ej Jdaide, Ras Baalbek, and El Qaa in Baalbek-Hermel are home to around 130,000 residents, including 55,000 Syrian refugees, who rely heavily on agriculture for their livelihoods. As a result of skyrocketing inflation in Lebanon, local farmers have been struggling to purchase seedlings, which has contributed to decreased agricultural production and diminished incomes, leading to food insecurity and growing intercommunal tensions over limited livelihoods. To support local farmers, local NGO Cooperation Without Borders (CWB) operates a 1,494m<sup>2</sup> climate-controlled nursery to provide seedlings at affordable prices. However, due to its limited capacity, many were left without this vital support. In response, by September 2022, USAID's Community Support Program (CSP) had expanded the capacity of CWB's seedlings nursery by providing it with a 1,867m<sup>2</sup> greenhouse, a climate-controlled germination room, an irrigation system, and all the necessary equipment to enable it to increase its production of high-quality, low-cost seedlings for underserved farmers.

By September 2023, the expanded nursery continued to operate at full capacity, enabling CWB to produce more than 1.2 million low-cost seedlings so far this year. In fact, since the beginning of the growing season in March 2023, CWB distributed more than 750,000 eggplant seedlings, around 300,000 sweet pepper seedlings, and more than 150,000 tomato seedlings, benefiting more than 250 local farmers. This intervention has enhanced agricultural production in Baalbek-Hermel by providing low-cost, high-quality seedling to nearly 1,000 farmers since September 2022.

**“Not only did this intervention increase CWB’s production of high-quality seedlings, but it will enable CWB to cultivate close to 1,200 hectares of land, contributing greatly to the agricultural sector amidst the country’s economic crisis.”**

*Elias Ghadban, founding member of CWB*

## CSP-supported Recyclables Management Generates Revenue for Makse Municipality



**Left:** CSP delivers a training on the operation and maintenance of equipment provided to the Makse Recyclables Collection Center (MRCC). **Right:** A municipal worker utilizing the CSP-provided weigh scale at the MRCC – Sep 2023.

Makse is located in the central region of the Beqaa Valley and is home to around 7,000 Lebanese residents and 1,500 refugees. The ongoing socio-economic crisis and the increased demand for public services has diminished municipal capacity to sustainably meet residents' basic needs, including those related to solid waste management. This has fueled communal tensions over public health following the accumulation of waste, garbage burning, and dumping in illegal sites. In response, USAID's Community Support Program (CSP) provided the municipality with 54 metal bins to facilitate the effective disposal and collection of recyclable waste, enabling it to be sold to buyers for processing. CSP also provided the Makse Recyclables Collection Center (MRCC) with safety equipment, fire extinguishers, and a weighing scale to accurately record quantities of collected and sold recyclables. The municipality also contributed to this intervention by implementing light rehabilitation works to the MRCC, including structural improvements, installing electricity cables, and building a workers' rest room. To further sustain this investment, CSP trained community members and municipal workers on designing and implementing awareness campaigns on sorting at source, safely collecting and disposing of waste, respecting hygiene requirements, and developing bookkeeping and fire evacuation plans.

Between June and September 2023, the MRCC recorded its first sales of collected recyclables at the facility: a total of one ton of carton compared to zero prior to CSP's intervention. The facility also recorded 250 kgs of collected plastic, which it will sell after reaching one ton.

**“Selling recyclable material has provided the municipality with needed income to enable us to provide the community with other essential services, especially amidst this nationwide economic crisis.”**

*Atef Al Mays, Mayor of Makse*

# CSP's Proposal Writing Trainings Enables the Municipality of Tannoura to Raise \$85,000 in Community Contributions for a Solar Farm

As the economic crisis in Lebanon persists, local authorities are struggling with diminished funds, impacting their ability to provide basic services in their communities. In order to increase the resources channeled towards local development in the communities it is assisting, USAID's Community Support Program (CSP) launched a series of proposal writing trainings in 2021, targeting 36 of its local partners including municipalities, cooperatives, schools, and CSOs across Lebanon's Beqaa, North and South regions. The trainings allow local partners to diversify income sources, access new donors, improve service delivery, and ensure the sustainability of USAID interventions.

CSP also supported four of its local partners to develop complete proposals and submit them to donors, including the Municipality of Tannoura in Rachaiya, Beqaa – which previously benefitted from a CSP-provided 250-KVA generator to supply needed household back-up electricity to more than 1000 residents in the village and power a network of 60 streetlights to enhance public safety. In parallel, CSP built municipal member capacities on financial management to improve cost recovery for service provision. To further enhance services in the community, the Tannoura Municipality wrote a proposal – with CSP support – to solicit contributions to install a \$110,000 solar farm to upgrade the town's water pumping system.

By August 2023, the municipality had collected \$85,000 from community members to implement the project. The municipality has since started implementation, in parallel to increasing efforts to raise the remaining funds needed to ensure continuous supply of potable water to more than 1,150 residents.



*CSP trains municipal members of Tannoura on financial management – Aug 2020*



*Solar farm works in Tannoura, Beqaa, implemented by the municipality to ensure water supply to residents. The project is funded by community members following support from CSP in proposal writing, raising more than \$85,000 – Aug 2023*

**"This comprehensive and meticulously crafted proposal significantly expedited the fundraising process. The community was deeply impressed by the project's exemplary management and transparent approach. Moreover, it played a pivotal role in reestablishing trust between the community and local authorities."**

*Ali Abou Zor, Mayor of Tannoura*