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COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROGRAM (CSP) IN LEBANON

NEWSLETTER

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USAID's Community Support Program Reaches Around 600,000 People by December 2023



▶ Check-out this video for a peek at the impact of CSP by the end of 2023

CSP Marks International Day of People with Disabilities on December 3

On International Day for People with Disabilities, USAID's CSP announced its partnership with local NGO, Arcenciel, to provide 130 people with disabilities across Lebanon with part-time income-generating opportunities at private sector partner businesses, other USAID projects, or at Arcenciel centers. During their temporary employment, participants will gain unique skills and expertise that can contribute significantly to their personal and professional development, allowing employers to focus on their abilities, embrace diversity, and create inclusive environments.



Providing 130 People with Disabilities with Temporary Employment Opportunities

"I aspire to improve my communication skills and connect with new people. For me, this opportunity is about growing as a professional and believing more in myself and my abilities."

Ibrahim Yazbek
Finance Officer

#IDPD2023

This visual is made possible by the support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The content of this visual is the sole responsibility of the Community Support Program (CSP) in Lebanon and within the cash for work activity implemented by Arcenciel and does not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

USAID Enhances Access to Irrigation for 3,760 People in Bechwat and Neighboring Villages

Bechwat, an agricultural town in Baalbek, Beqaa, is home to 2,000 Lebanese residents and 500 refugees. The village pumping station is a main source of water for irrigation to Bechwat residents and the three neighboring villages of Safra, El Mshayrfieh, and Ez Zrazir, that are home to around 1,260 residents. For the last 30 years, Bechwat's municipality operated a back-up generator to ensure continuous supply of water for irrigation amid frequent state-electricity cuts. However, with state-electricity provision down to 2 hours per day and the worsening state of municipal finances, the back-up generator fell into disrepair and the municipality could no longer afford to maintain and operate it. In response, CSP upgraded Bechwat's pumping station for irrigated water by installing a solar farm to ensure the pump's continuous operation. CSP also rehabilitated the station's operation room and trained members of the Bechwat Municipality and the town's agricultural cooperative on the safe operation and maintenance of the solar panels and on equitable distribution of water.

The upgraded pumping station became operational in November 2023, and is now providing adequate and sustainable access to irrigation water for 3,760 residents and farmers across four villages, while also reducing municipal fuel costs and mitigating tensions over water shortages in the area.



The USAID/CSP upgraded water pumping station in Bechwat, Beqaa – Nov 2023

“Thanks to this USAID intervention, we are now able to provide sustainable access to water in the area, alleviating years of water shortages and irrigation challenges. The upgraded water pumping station will play a pivotal role in the agricultural sector and significantly contribute to farmer livelihoods”

Hamdan Keyrouz, Mayor of Bechwat

CSP Intern Lands Full Time Job at the USAID-Funded Agriculture and Rural Empowerment (ARE) Program

Launched in 2020, CSP's internship program provides students from 11 Lebanese universities with the opportunity to gain professional and practical experience to kickstart their careers while also generating a temporary income to support their families during the current economic crisis. In partnership with universities under the USAID-funded University Scholarship Program (USP) and Higher Education Capacity Development (HECD) program, the CSP internship program places students and recent graduates in 3–6-month internships across USAID-funded programs in Lebanon

Mariam Abboud, a Business Management graduate from the American University of Sciences and Technology (AUST), is one of 159 students who have completed their internship so far. During her internship, Mariam supported the USAID-funded Agriculture and Rural Empowerment (ARE) program in providing operations and logistics assistance to the private sector engagement department. Following her internship, Mariam was hired by ARE as a full-time regional private sector engagement assistant. By December 2023, Mariam is one of 78 CSP interns who have secured full-time employment. So far, 52% of CSP interns have secured permanent jobs after completing the program, compared to the overall 34% employment rate among Lebanese university graduates.



Mariam, former CSP intern, at her full-time job as a Regional Private Sector Engagement Assistant at the USAID-funded ARE program

“My journey from intern to full-time employee has been incredibly rewarding during the difficult times in Lebanon. My priority has always been to stay close to my country and family. Working with USAID has been a tremendous honor that opened new doors for me”

Mariam Abboud, former CSP intern

USAID Ensures Operation and Maintenance of the Aaitanit Wastewater Treatment Plant

The Aaitanit wastewater treatment plant in the Beqaa is one of the few facilities that has continued to operate in Lebanon since the onset of the financial crisis. With a capacity to treat 5000 m³ of wastewater per day, and operated by the Bouhaira Union of Municipalities, the plant serves the villages of Aaitanit, Machghara, Baaloul, and Qaraoun. The facility's ageing equipment and diminished funds at both the Union of Municipalities and the Beqaa Water Establishment reduced its operational effectiveness, risking its continuity. In response, in September 2023, USAID's CSP completed the rehabilitation of the plant by installing new pumps and electro-mechanical systems and upgraded its sludge management by constructing a new building for thickening/dewatering equipment.

To sustain this intervention, CSP is training the Beqaa Water Establishment and the Bouhaira Union of Municipalities on the operation and maintenance of the facility. In parallel, USAID through CSP is providing operational and maintenance cost support for the treatment plan for at least one year; this includes fuel, spare parts, operation personnel, and sludge handling. In addition to ensuring wastewater services for more than 23,700 residents, USAID assistance in Aaitanit is preventing raw sewage from overflowing into the Litani river.



Check out this news report by Al-Hurra for more on USAID's wastewater assistance in Aaitanit

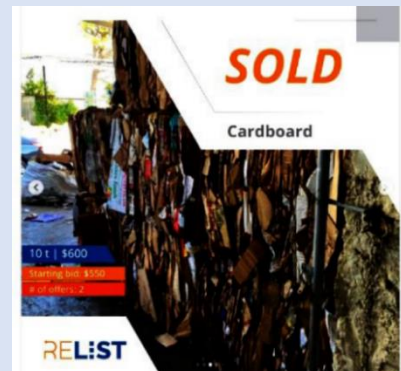
“USAID’s efforts in ensuring the sustainability of this facility during severe national financial constraints has been vital in enabling the Union and the Water Establishment to provide reliable wastewater management services to our communities”

Yehia Daher, Head of the Bouhaira Union of Municipalities

USAID Enhances Revenues for Material Recovery Facilities through its Recyclables Waste Management Community of Practice

Since 2019, Lebanon's economic crisis has been limiting the capacity of local authorities to provide essential services, including solid waste management collection, treatment, and disposal. In response, USAID's CSP has been supporting 57 Lebanese municipalities and local partners, including Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) in Bechmizine and Amioun, to recover recyclables and decrease the volume of total waste through the provision of updated equipment and technical assistance. To increase impact, avoid duplication, save on resources, and ensure the sustainability of these interventions, CSP established a Recyclables Waste Management Community of Practice (RWM CoP) in coordination with the USAID-funded program Diverting Waste by Encouraging Reuse and Recycling (DAWERR). The RWM CoP brings together municipalities and local organizations already benefitting from USAID-funded recyclables management interventions to share lessons learnt and best practices, enhance services to local communities, and discuss innovative recyclable waste management practices.

As part of the RWM CoP, CSP had previously provided a new digital database of recyclable waste buyers in Lebanon, and DAWERR introduced an online marketplace for recyclables known as 'RELIST', enabling users to directly buy and sell recyclables at the best identified price, thus increasing competition among buyers and revenues of the MRFs. In November 2023, the Bechmizine MRF was able to sell its cardboard production to a buyer through the 'RELIST' application at a price of \$60.8 per ton, marking a \$10 increase in revenue per ton compared to previous months. With annual production exceeding 190 tons, this interaction alone is expected to increase BMRF's yearly income by more than \$1900.



Screenshot from the 'RELIST' online recyclables marketplace showcasing BMRF's enhanced cardboard sales through the platform

"The recyclables waste management community of practice has played a significant role in sustaining USAID's assistance to the BMRF. Enhanced revenues will lead to financial feasibility, higher salaries for existing staff, and recruitment opportunities for community members during this economic crisis"

Fawzi Kalash, Mayor of Bechmizine

USAID Enhances Safe, Potable Water Provision by 9000 Liters per Day for 5,450 Residents in Jinsnaya and El Qariye

Jinsnaya in South Lebanon is home to 1250 residents, the majority of whom returned from Lebanon's urban centers to settle down permanently in the village amidst the country's socio-economic crisis. The village water network, which was designed for a much smaller population of around 500 people, needed an upgrade to meet the demands of the recent influx of newcomers. While residents used to rely on another water source from the neighboring town of El Qariye, its capacity is limited and unable to meet household water demands in both towns, fueling intercommunal tensions over water provision. In response, USAID's CSP constructed a 300-cubic-meter elevated water tank, which became operational in February 2023, to provide Jinsnaya's residents, and up to 4200 residents in El Qariye, with a sustainable and equitable source of water. USAID's CSP also installed electro-mechanical and chlorination systems to ensure safe water and high-standard operations. To ensure the sustainability of this intervention, CSP trained two



The CSP-constructed 300 m³ water tank in Jinsnaya, South Lebanon – Dec , 2023

South Lebanon Water Establishment (SLWE) staff and a local worker on the safe operation and maintenance of the new chlorination system. USAID through CSP also provided the new facility with fire extinguishers, first aid kits, and appropriate personal safety equipment, as well as supported the community to establish a water distribution schedule and to implement a social media awareness campaign on water conservation.

By December 2023, the new elevated water tank has increased water supply by around 9 m³ per day (9000 liters), notably enhancing water access to 5,450 residents in Jinsnaya and Qariye, all while alleviating the economic burden on households who had to previously purchase trucked water for \$30 monthly - compared to an average household income of \$120. The SLWE also reported monthly savings of \$2000 on back-up generator fuel costs due to the large capacity of the new tank, and the decreased frequency of water pumping needs.

"Thanks to this essential support provided by USAID, we now have a daily supply of clean potable water, compared to previously accessing water only one day a week. This has relieved us from the daily struggles of water shortage, making a real difference in our lives"

Solange Aoun, Jinsnaya resident"

CSP Enables the Municipality of Khirbet Daoud to Generate Revenue through its USAID-Provided Electrical System

Khirbet Daoud in Akkar, North Lebanon, is home to around 1500 Lebanese residents and 5000 Syrian refugees. The sustained presence of a large refugee population significantly depleted already weak infrastructure and increased the demand for public services. Coupled with a nationwide economic crisis and an unreliable, low-voltage electricity distribution network, the municipality's diminished capacities could not sustainably meet residents' household electricity needs, which fueled communal tensions over equitable access to back-up electricity amidst state-power outages. In response, in 2020, USAID's CSP in coordination with Electricité du Liban (EDL), provided the municipality with an upgraded electrical transmission system and installed a new transformer and earthing system to ensure reliable and equitable distribution of electricity. To ensure the sustainability of this intervention, and enable the municipality to cover the operation and maintenance costs of the upgraded back-up electricity system, CSP provided it with an automated financial management system and trained municipal staff on accounting principles, fee collection procedures, and the development of municipal budgets and annual financial statements. In parallel, and in coordination with the municipality, CSP conducted community awareness sessions on electricity conservation.

By end of 2023, the municipality of Khirbet Daoud had exponentially increased its annual revenue from electricity collection fees to more than 13 million LBP - *from 319,000 LBP in 2021 and more than 9 million LBP in 2021*. Using the new system, the municipality was able to digitally, and in real time, generate a detailed taxpayer database, enabling a transparent collection process. Although municipalities are still collecting fees for services according to the old rate of 1,500 LBP to 1 USD, starting in 2024, the municipality is envisioned to be allowed by the central government to transition into collecting fees according to the Government of Lebanon exchange rate of 89,000 LBP to 1 USD, which will substantially increase its earnings and ability to provide services for its 6,500 residents



More than 200 students from two schools in Khirbet Daoud participated in awareness raising sessions on electricity conservation, Akkar – Nov, 2023

“This USAID support has been the backbone for our municipal work. The automated financial model enabled us to generate revenue, design budgets, and generate transparent financial reports”

Saad el Dine, Mayor of Khirbet Daoud.