



Funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation

PRESS RELEASE

UN-Habitat and Ministry of Social Affairs launch road maps toward socioeconomic development with ten unions of municipalities

Beirut, 20 February 2024: Under the patronage and in the presence of Lebanese Minister of Social Affairs, Dr. Hector Al-Hajjar, UN-Habitat marked the successful completion of the project "Improving planning capacities for social and economic local development" funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, marking a significant milestone in the socioeconomic development journey of local authorities.

The event took place in the presence of the United Nations Deputy Special Coordinator, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Lebanon, Imran Riza; Head of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation in Beirut, Alessandra Piermattei, in addition to representatives from embassies, ministries, unions of municipalities and municipalities, civil society organisations and UN agencies.

The "Improving planning capacities for social and economic local development" project worked with unions of municipalities to strengthen their planning capacities in socioeconomic development while fostering collaboration between social development centres affiliated to the Ministry of Social Affairs, local authorities, and civil society organizations. At the start of the project, 60 unions of municipalities were contacted to participate, of which 38 expressed interests.

"We believe in the importance of cooperation and networking at the local level between local administrations, represented by municipalities, social development centres, and civil society. Therefore, you will find us working to improve the ministry's centres and provide them with services and human and practical capabilities to be the spearhead in directing the development process and implementing it professionally, and providing a package of services that eases the burden on citizen" said H.E. Dr. Hector Al-Hajjar, Lebanese Minister of Social Affairs.

Of the 38, 10 unions of municipalities were selected based on various criteria to work with UN-Habitat and the Ministry of Social Affairs in identifying their evolving multisectoral territorial needs and priorities, to develop recommendations that could shape the preparation of socioeconomic action plans for their respective areas.

“The collaboration between the Unions of Municipalities and the Social Development Centres of the Ministry of Social Affairs with the active involvement of the local stakeholders in the process of analyzing the resources and the challenges of the territory to develop the 10 Road maps was challenging but useful towards optimization of resources and reduction of duplication of interventions. We consider that dialogue is relevant for sustainable and holistic local development. We look forward to see concrete actions undertaken towards constructive initiatives in the 10 Union of Municipalities supported by AICS and other donors”, Alessandra Piermattei, Head of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation – AICS in Beirut said.

These efforts culminated in the creation of a series of booklets that feature data and analysis on the current conditions of their specific union, upon which, context-specific road maps were created that can guide the development of socioeconomic action plans for each. Providing a baseline for local and national decision-makers to build upon to implement projects and policies in their communities.

The ten unions of municipalities and their respective booklets are: [Jouneh – Akkar](#); [Iqlim El-Kharoub El-Chamali – Mount Lebanon](#); [Jezzine – South](#); [Chamal Baalbek – Baalbek](#); [Chouf El-Souayjani – Mount Lebanon](#); [Jord El-Qaytaa – Akkar](#); [Caza Zgharta – North](#); [Jord El-Aala-Bhamdoun – Mount Lebanon](#); [Iqlim El-Tuffah – Nabatiyeh](#); and, [Qalaat El-Istiqlal – Bekaa](#).

“When working towards local socio-economic development, we must look beyond mere numbers and plans. Our focus should be on empowering communities, investing in their human capital, enhancing their infrastructure, and unlocking their agricultural and tourism potential. It's about fostering sustainable, locally-driven solutions, rooted in the knowledge and expertise of local communities. These solutions can offer valuable insights and best practices, paving the way for future reforms that embrace a bottom-up and people-centered approach,” said Mr. Imran Riza, United Nations Deputy Special Coordinator, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Lebanon.

The event included presentations of the booklets’ key findings by the unions of municipalities, highlighting challenges, recommendations, and strategic directions for socioeconomic development.

“Lebanon continues to grapple with an unprecedented socioeconomic crisis, which has left local authorities struggling to cope. They are at the forefront in responding to the ever-increasing needs of the communities they serve, with limited or no resources to do so due to the country’s severe liquidity crisis. Despite this, UN-Habitat hopes that these booklets can serve as an evidence-based guide for the ten unions that were selected for this project, to work with potential future partners to implement the recommend actions with the hope of improving the socioeconomic conditions of their cities and towns,” said Taina Christiansen, Head of the UN-Habitat Lebanon Country Programme.

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About the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

UN-Habitat works in over 90 countries supporting people in cities and human settlements for a better urban future. Working with governments and local partners, its high impact projects combine world-class expertise and local knowledge to deliver timely and targeted solutions. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes a dedicated Goal on cities, SDG 11 – to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

About the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS)

The Italian Agency for Development Cooperation - AICS, is the Public Agency responsible for promoting international Development, providing Public Aid and Humanitarian Emergencies. AICS is operative since January 2016, supporting the Italian government, its European and international partners in promoting Development around the world. The Italian Agency is active in the fields of health, education, and environment, and works for a fair distribution of wealth and equal access to infrastructure and basic services. AICS collaborates with non-governmental organizations, state institutions and the private sector.

For media enquiries:

Lubna Elmahdy

UN-Habitat Lebanon

T: +961 1 985 398

E: lubna.elmahdy1@un.org

Samar Maalouf

Ministry of Social Affairs

T: 03186032

E: samarmlf@gmail.com

Jean Claude Mbede Fouda

Italian Agency for Development Cooperation

T: +961 5 951376/377/378 – ext. 209

E: jeanclaude.mbedefouda@aics.gov.it