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## **Lebanon: Delivery of Improved Community Services, Including Drinking Water Supply, Sanitation, and Irrigation.**

**Operating Unit:** USAID/Lebanon

**Source:** USAID/Lebanon Results, Review, and Resource Request (R4), FY 2002.

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**Keywords:** community participation; drinking water supply; irrigation; Lebanon; sanitation.

### **Related Strategic Objective:**

SO 1: Reconstruction and expanded economic opportunity.

Lebanon's Rural Community Development Clusters (RCDCs) to help deliver improved rural community services, including drinking water supply, sanitation, and irrigation, were conceived by USAID as the flagship of the country strategy developed in late 1996, in coordination with local NGOs. At that time, rural areas had yet to benefit from the end of the civil war, and few donor resources were directed exclusively to rural areas. Whereas USAID had originally proposed concentrating resources on some thirty villages, NGOs pointed out that such selectivity would be counter productive. Instead, they suggested that USAID concentrate on assistance to approximately 30 "clusters" of villages. This would have the effect of bringing together villages that were often estranged, and would expand the base of villages receiving assistance. The NGOs, in their applications for five cooperative agreements, chose the clusters based upon criteria set by USAID.

The cooperative agreements were bid during the summer of 1997, and awarded at the end of September. Each NGO had an average of six clusters, with a total of 29 clusters comprising 230 villages. In each village, committees of local citizens were formed, and each village in turn sent representatives to the Cluster Committee, which was responsible for allocating funding and the oversight of procurement and implementation. The clusters and villages agreed to contribute at least 25% of the in-kind cost of activities, which included basic infrastructure, income-producing activities, civic-participation, and environmental activities. The USAID Mission emphasized rapid selection and implementation of activities, and within three months activities numbered in the hundreds.

Today, there are over 650 activities in 251 villages, which are rapidly returning to economic and social viability. The program has attracted funding from local government, the central government, local NGOs, and other donors. It has been studied by other bilateral and multilateral organizations for replication in Lebanon, and is being studied for replication on a much larger scale in West Bank/Gaza.

When occupying forces withdrew from the "Jezzine Pocket" in June 1999, USAID mobilized resources to add a Jezzine Cluster, and was implementing new activities within two weeks. To date, that cluster has grown to 16 villages and more than 50 activities, most of which have already been completed. This success led the Mission to work with U.S. Representative Marcy Kaptur and Mercy Corps International to push for a USDA 416b Commodity Grant to expand the clusters into new areas of South Lebanon upon withdrawal. In February, the USDA announced a 73,000 MT allocation of wheat to Lebanon, and plans have already been implemented to immediately expand the RCDCs by ten clusters in the South.

When the RCDCs were initiated, there had been no local government elections since 1963, and the village committees effectively became shadow local governments. When, in 1998, municipal elections were held, more than 200 individuals from local committees were elected to local government, because they had demonstrated that they could serve well their communities. The committees were retained, though in many cases the municipal council is still represented on the committee. The working relationship between the local committees and municipal councils was so effective that the Mission initiated a program of support to all of the municipal councils within the RCDCs, to provide them with the computer hardware, software, and training to perform their functions. To date the RCDCs have resulted in improved infrastructure for over 56,000 families and have improved or placed in production over 14,000 hectares of farmland.