

SMC - She Makes a Change Campaign

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Our Aims: Empowering women economically in order to become active contributors to the income of their families and in order to be active members in Lebanon's society. Additionally, our project aims at supporting and preserving local products and traditions, as well as, improving agricultural practises and encouraging crop-growing.



SMC Campaign Team

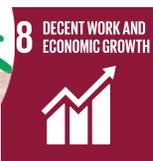
Global Goals Tackled:

Our project aims to lessen the imbalance between people in our society today. Not only between the rich and poor but also between men and women. We strive to empower women which are often disregarded in being useful to getting an income. A woman is then enabled to be just as equal to any other person in society.



A lot of rural areas in Lebanon suffer from financial difficulties, especially after the recent economic crisis which led the Lebanese currency to plummet. Many people are desperate for a stable source of income, so this project gives them a way to provide for their families.

We partnered with the faculty of agriculture in the American University of Beirut who helped us with planting crops and in fulfilling health standards in our products, along with the municipality and the Social Cultural Youth Organization of Bannay that helped us identify the women in need.



Agriculture in Lebanon, and specifically agricultural processing has been in a decline, so we thought that a similar initiative could have a positive impact on that sector.



Many areas in Lebanon are still stuck in old cultures that believe; Women are not born to work. However, through our project, women are trained on how to produce goods. Thus, they now have their first job that breaks the convention and socially empowers them.

Highlights:

- Instructing the women on crop growing and food sanitary based on a training that was delivered to us by the Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences at the American University of Beirut .
- Raising awareness in the village about the importance of women labour.
- Convincing the women to use their culinary skills for them to be able to support themselves financially.



Visiting the donated land - with the donor of the land, the municipal president and the students of the faculty of agriculture at American University of Beirut.

We partnered with the Bennay's Municipality, AUB's Faculty of Agriculture & Bennay's Youth Cultural Association




Learnings and Skills:

We worked with new people, which made us build relationships with more partners to make a successful project and we easily solved the conflicts that happened between each other. Thus, we all gained **relationship building and conflict resolution skills** after stress caused by obstacles like road closures because of the revolution, fluctuations in price and the recent COVID-19 outbreak.

We got donated two lands that are enough for all the crops.



We have also learned **teamwork skills** by learning how to overcome challenges together : “We were overcoming challenges together and helping each other in simple and complicated things” - Hanaa.

We prepared all the places we'll work in and did all the statistics required.



Project	Area	Year	Number of people	Self-employment	Income in USD
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10

Moreover, “We acquired **persuasion and influencing skills** as we convinced the women for cooperation and getting many partners on board” -Reem, we knew that we could make the impossible possible.

We thought of fundraising ideas and then...The Revolution broke out and the roads closed; our partners rushed to help and then...the economic crisis blew up; we started working on online fundraising and then...the banks banned the transfer of money from abroad.




Furthermore, we also learned **how to combine our strengths together**. “We all build over the blocks built by other peers until we reach a strong and a solid idea that can be developed into something feasible.” -Jad.

We visited Baissour's Agricultural Industrialization for partnering with and then...Covid-19 showed up, Baissour's Center closed as our hopes got destroyed.

However we got a call one day with the ESDU that promised for the cooperation after Covid-19. And here we are now preparing for the launching of the Project after Covid-19.

We also acquired many more skills : “I learned **the importance of taking every feedback into consideration** which made our aim clearer and easier to achieve.”

Our journey and the challenges we faced.

Impacts and Outcomes:

Despite the continuous challenges we faced, we are most proud of building partnerships in the community and starting the conversation about women's social and economic roles. This was frowned upon by certain villagers, however we had *Bennay's Youth Cultural Association*, the *Municipality of Bennay* and *Women's Association of Bennay* on our side. In addition, the few women who dared to sign up for the project were starting to outreach to their friends and neighbors before the COVID-19 outbreak. We also partnered with the *Faculty of Agriculture of the American University of Beirut (AUB)* and *Environment and Sustainable Development Unit of AUB (ESDU)*. Three students from *AUB* helped us make intensive training for the women and for us about crops and sanitary processes and a student from *Lebanese University* did all the statistics for our project as her thesis. The seven impacted women always dreamt of having job and being self dependent, but life didn't help them achieve their hopes. Through the *SMC Campaign*, we were able to give the women a breakthrough. By influencing them, we started a journey together and we'll continue it together, too. We are willing to continue this journey with these women and give the chance for other women to join us, after the COVID-19 outbreak ends.

“Those children gave us hope, they supported us mentally before supporting us financially; we're waiting for them after Covid-19”

Sent by one of the participating women.

“What you did is more than interesting, we're so proud to have such a strong generation, you are the ones who will change this society, we're waiting for you”.

A message by the president of the cultural association of Bennay

“Honestly I'm so excited for this project and I liked your will to achieve. Through SMC I will be able to achieve my goal of working and being self dependent”.

Another message from another woman

