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## Office of Transition Initiatives

# LEBANON

July 2011

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) launched the Lebanon Civic Support Initiative (LCSI) to promote peace and stability in Lebanon. Its objectives are to (1) catalyze youth activism in marginalized areas; (2) enhance civil society organizations' capacity to advocate for local or national issues; and (3) mitigate tensions in conflict-prone areas. These objectives contribute to U.S. Government efforts to preserve democratic space and strengthen Lebanon's fragile civil peace. Since 2007, OTI has supported 199 activities for \$17 million. The program is currently scheduled to run until 2013.

### PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

In Lebanon, OTI partners with a wide range of civil society players in marginalized areas of the country's north, the Beqaa, and the south to engage youth in civic activism, bolster nonpartisan groups, and strengthen reform-minded civic actors. While actively seizing key moments to encourage national-level dialogue, OTI works primarily at the community level, where it supports youth-led initiatives and civil society organizations through small in-kind grants and technical assistance.

In closed political environments around Lebanon, OTI support to nascent youth organizations has helped youth to increase independent space and effectively influence decision makers. OTI is successful at working in communities where extremist groups have a monopoly on public discourse, services, and entertainment. For example, in Hermel, a conservative area where radical forces are on the rise, OTI's partner engages local youth in independent civic work to renovate the city's only youth center. The youth participate in a series of trainings on citizenship, conflict resolution, project design, and municipal governance. In parallel with the trainings, the participants are conducting needs assessments in their respective neighborhoods.

OTI also works to empower civil society to push for positive, sustainable change. OTI is supporting a nationwide advocacy campaign aimed at introducing Lebanon's first solid waste disposal law. OTI's partners are holding a series of activities to raise awareness of the waste management issue and mobilize civil society to support the introduction of a new waste management law. To support this initiative, OTI's partners are conducting an online promotion campaign—hosting a national day of action and a nationwide tour to improve awareness and understanding on this issue.

To empower Lebanese youth and provide increased access to one of the few large green spaces in Beirut, OTI is training young people on advocacy and lobbying techniques with the aim of reopening an urban pine forest park to the public. The park, which is surrounded by conflict-prone neighborhoods comprised of Christian, Sunni and Shia populations, is currently only accessible to the wealthy. With OTI support, the partner group is engaging youth in a series of workshops on team building, group dynamics, and social media. By bringing together young people from these often polarized communities to work on a common cause, OTI aims to build relationships and mitigate conflict.

### FAST FACTS

Start Date	September 2007
Budget, FY11	\$2 million in TI funds;\$3 million in ESF
Budget, to date	\$36.5 million
Partner	Chemonics International, Inc.
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