

Environment and Sustainable Development Unit (ESDU)

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Highlights on ESDU Activities during 2014/2015:

During the academic year 2014–15, ESDU implemented several projects covering a budget of 278,179 USD from the private sector and different international donor agencies.

Regional Networking

“KariaNet” Knowledge Access for Rural Inter-connected Areas Network is a regional network funded by IDRC and IFAD for the management and sharing of knowledge, information and experience in agriculture and rural development in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. A competitive call for an expression of interest to host KariaNet was launched and the ESDU was selected to be the hosting organization. The portal is now being transferred to a new server with new design and content and will be “open access” for users by the end of 2015. ESDU will align KariaNet activities with Local Food Systems; contextualize success cases, link with regional and international networks and centers in the region.

Capacity Building

“Mainstreaming Evaluation: Theory and Practice in the MENA Region” The project is funded by IDRC and provides capacity development, small R&D grants for MENA specific evaluation research and publications, “Arabization” of evaluation methodologies and publications as well as virtual and face-to-face meeting and networking opportunities. One of the positive unintended outcomes of the project was the emergence of the first MENA Professional Association on Development Evaluation (“EvalMENA”).

Rural Development

“Souk aal Souk promoting nutrition education in universities and organic agriculture in Wakf lands” This project aims at implementing a series of farmers’ markets to promote local organic and healthy products and build linkages between small-scale producers and urban residents as well as training producers on good agricultural

practices and organizational and managerial skills to sustain the market. It builds on a previous project also funded by Waterfront City Cares.

“Establishing a Food Trail in the Higher Shouf and West Beqaa Regions” In partnership with the Food Heritage Foundation and the Shouf Biosphere Reserve, a network of villages was established to promote food and agricultural heritage through tourism: *darb el karam* food heritage trail. Touristic packages were developed and the trail hosts were trained and are now ready to receive visitors and guests. This project is funded by USAID through the LIVCD program.

“Supporting community kitchens and kitchen gardens for Syrian refugees and host communities in Lebanon” Supported by Dr. Scholl Foundation Grant Program, the project aims at enhancing the social rehabilitation, food security, health and nutritional diversity among the most vulnerable host families and Syrian refugees while providing benefits to the host community by ultimately creating an income generation source for women. In partnership with the Hariri foundation, 17 Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian ladies received a set of training on food safety, healthy eating and managerial and entrepreneurship skills, and prepared healthy traditional meals that were distributed to 400 vulnerable families in Old Saida.

“GHATA: Bringing Education to Informal Tented Settlements” This project is implemented in partnership with Kayany Foundation and the Center for Civic Engagement and Community Service (CCECS) and funded by Reach Out to Asia – Qatar Foundation. It aims at establishing, in 3 schools hosting Syrian refugees’ students, 3 small kitchens/cooking units serving healthy food to school children (4-14 years). Menus of healthy food options/snacks will be developed, and the capacity of the cooking ladies will be built on food safety and standardized recipes.

New academic program

“The RCODE Master of Sciences Program in Rural Community Development” Under the FAFS, ESDU launched its new Graduate Program leading to the degree of Master of Science (MS) in Rural Community Development (RCODE, thesis or non-thesis) in fall 2014 by enrolling the visiting Professor Dr. Michelle Obeid, as part-timer. Dr. Guiliano Martiniello was recruited for the position of Assistant Professor, effective fall 2015-2016, for a period of four years. Dr. Martiniello will lead and promote the RCODE program and insure networking with national and international programs for students’ exchange and research projects, while teaching, administrating and monitoring the program. Seven students are enrolled in the program.

Strategic Challenges:

- To attract students for the RCODE Master Program
- To sustain KariaNet regional knowledge management network
- To put Local Food Systems on the regional and international food security agenda