

Environment and Sustainable Development Unit (ESDU)

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Highlights on ESDU Activities from September 1, 2015 to August 31, 2016:

During the academic year 2015–16, ESDU implemented several projects covering a budget of 189,480USD 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. ESDU has been hosting the network since 2015 and has designed a new portal that was launched in March 2016, accessible to all users. ESDU is aligning KariaNet activities with Local Food Systems while contextualizing success cases, and partnering with regional and international networks and centers in the region.

Development

“**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 to scale up AUB-CCECS GHATA intervention to assemble two school campuses in effort to provide Community Based Education (CBE) for refugee children in addition to child protection services and nutritional assistance. ESDU team consulted on the establishment of 2 school kitchenettes within the campuses and led the capacity building of the women cooks in each school on food safety, healthy nutrition and menu development. Al throughout the year, students received a variety of healthy snacks hence improving their dietary diversity and access to nutritious food.

“Building the Food Security and Economic Resilience of Syrian Refugees and

Vulnerable Members of their Host Communities in Beirut/Lebanon” aims at building the food security and economic resilience of Syrian refugees and vulnerable members of their host communities – enabling them to survive and prosper in the face of decreasing international assistance. The project is in collaboration with NEF and YMCA, and ESDU is in charge of the implementation of the urban agriculture component of the proposed project. Urban agricultural kits were designed and provided by ESDU to 40 families so far (out of 150) in Bourj Hammoud, Dawra and Nabaa areas, and capacity building sessions were delivered to the project beneficiaries enabling them to producer healthy food on their balconies, windows and roofs.

New academic program

“The RCODE Master of Sciences Program in Rural Community Development”

(Details in RCODE report)

“Arab Women: Keepers of the Land” ESDU 15th Anniversary celebrations preparations

The Environment and Sustainable Development Unit (www.aub.edu.lb/fafs/esdu) was born fifteen years ago in spring 2001 at the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences of the American University of Beirut. Since then, ESDU has managed to establish itself as one of the major trend-setters in R&D in the MENA region and has developed a strong base in rural sustainable livelihoods and participatory resource management. ESDU has also been involved in the creation of public-private partnerships in order to enhance the operation of community-based enterprises drawing on the resources of a wide variety of donors.

To celebrate its 15th anniversary, ESDU planned for a ceremony under the theme anniversary “*Arab women: Keepers of the land*” through which ESDU will pay tribute to partners and friends who have marked the development world by advancing the role of women to preserve their lands and heritage. **Award winning filmmaker Mai Masri will deliver the keynote speech “Through Women Eyes’: Reclaiming a Fractured Land”.**

The celebrations will be held on **Thursday September 29, 2016** at the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences and will include an all day long traditional farmers’ market, an award ceremony, a heritage dinner buffet and special entertainment.

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**