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PRESS RELEASE

EU-funded project will improve access to water for 50000 people in south Lebanon

Today, the project *“Improving Efficiency, Availability and Management of Water Resources in South Lebanon”* funded with a 2.2 million Euro grant from the European Union was launched in Al Sultaniyeh (caza of Bint Jbeil). Representatives of the implementing NGO Action contre la faim (ACF), the South Lebanon Water Establishment, the Litani River Authority and the 9 beneficiary villages: Qalaway, Mjadel, Khirbet Selim, Baraashit, Kounine, Hanine, Houla, Taybeh and Bint Jbeil, attended the launching ceremony.

The project, which will be implemented over a period of 2 years by ACF in partnership with the South Lebanon Water Establishment, the Litani River Authority and the 9 beneficiary municipalities, aims to improve access to water through increasing the efficiency of water networks. Thus, it will significantly improve the living conditions of 50000 vulnerable people in the Bint Jbeil and Marjeyoun districts. The project also aims to enhance the coordination between local water authorities, municipalities and civil communities.

Works that will be carried out include the construction and rehabilitation of essential water infrastructures, such as wells, storage tanks and water connections, as well as the development of sustainable management and safety plans in collaboration with the local authorities, municipalities and civil communities. *“Partnerships with local authorities and organisations are key to developing sustainable projects”*, explains Rui Oliveira, ACF Country Director in Lebanon.

These works are needed due to the poor conditions of water distribution and storage systems, which regularly lead to the loss of large quantities of water that could be used productively otherwise. The high costs of operating the water system have left the water establishments with a vast network of inefficiently operating systems. This situation worsened with the influx of Syrian refugees in 2012, which has led the country's water networks to a breaking point. Mr. Oliveira said: *“We are responding to the needs of populations affected by conflict, often in emergency situation, but after more than five years of crisis in Syria, it is essential to develop long-term projects that are valuable for all the communities”*.

Raising awareness among the communities regarding water quality and conservation will be the last axis of the project. Water quality and quantity, whether for domestic or agricultural purposes, are key for the future of Lebanon.

The event concluded with the signature of a memorandum of understanding between Action contre la faim and the 9 beneficiary municipalities, aiming to establish the involvement of each municipality in the programme.