



Citi Foundation



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AMIDEAST and Citi Foundation Recognize 72 Lebanese Youth Participants in the *Skills for Success®: Employability and Entrepreneurship* Program

AMIDEAST and the Citi Foundation are proud to be recognizing 72 youth who participated in the *Skills for Success®: Employability and Entrepreneurship* program, a two-year partnership designed to provide economic opportunities for youth in Lebanon. On February 22, we will celebrate the graduation of the program's participants.

The program, part of the Citi Foundation's global Pathways to Progress initiative, focused on efforts to build a new generation of entrepreneurs and work-ready youth by helping them gain skills needed to succeed in the job market, and for those with entrepreneurial potential, to hone their skills and establish their own businesses.

Designed and implemented by AMIDEAST, the Skills for Success program served unemployed Lebanese technical and university education graduates aged 20-24 living in four regions of Lebanon: Tripoli and neighboring towns in North Lebanon, Rachaya and Hasbaya in South Lebanon, the Aley region in Mount Lebanon, and the greater Beirut region. The program provided intensive training on personal development, professional skills, workplace experience, and career guidance to enable participants to select and successfully follow a path of employability or entrepreneurship. Complementing the total of 275 formal training hours were practical, relevant internships, mentoring, and coaching.

"AMIDEAST is proud to be completing this strategically vital program in partnership with the Citi Foundation to empower the futures of 72 youth in four regions of Lebanon. Their jobs, new businesses, and the skills they have gained will position them for better economic futures," said Barbara Shahin Batlouni, AMIDEAST/Lebanon Country Director. *"Several participants were so successful that they found jobs even before finishing the program's formal components, and although they will not be at the graduation event, we are enormously proud of their accomplishments."*

To date, 42 youth have secured jobs, 12 are starting businesses, and eight are continuing their higher education—each a symbol of success in their own way. During the graduation event, seven entrepreneurship track teams will be pitching their new businesses from an array of diverse sectors, such as agriculture, jewelry and fashion design, natural food products, cosmetics and essential oils, and academic centers and after school programs.

In a signature capstone activity for similar AMIDEAST programs across the MENA region, the *Skills for Success®* participants conducted a series of "Pay-It-Forward" workshops for other youth in their communities, broadening the program's impact by sharing the knowledge and skills they gained as well as helping them build presentation skills and self-confidence.

"We were astounded at the growth our program participants showed as they developed critical business skills and then shared them with other youth in the culminating 'Pay-It-Forward' component," said Country Director Batlouni. *"In this phase, our participants provided further skills training to 250 other youth, increasing their awareness about multiple career paths and the skills important for building a better future."*

As with other programs in the Citi Foundation's global Pathways To Progress initiative, Skills For Success focused on developing economic opportunities for youth through activities such as entrepreneurship education, engagement in the formal economy through first jobs, and the acquisition of leadership, financial, and workplace skills.

“Citi Foundation has a longstanding relationship with AMIDEAST and we are thrilled about this partnership to support Lebanese youth move closer towards their career goals and help them build a sustainable future here in Lebanon,” said Michel Sawaya, Chief Executive Officer, Citi Lebanon.

The program consisted of several phases. The first phase focused on both personal and business skills: intensive training to enhance English language, computer, workplace readiness, personal development, and soft skills. In the next phase, participants followed either an employability track or entrepreneurship track, based on their interests and initial business ideas. Those that followed the employability track benefited from further training on job search skills to prepare them for entry-level employment. Twenty-one participants were placed in internships at organizations around Lebanon, allowing them to build a stronger resume and gain on-the-job skills and experience. Meanwhile, youth in the entrepreneurship track completed AMIDEAST’s intensive *Start Your Own Business* workshop and received additional specialized coaching from business leaders and experts. In the final Pay-It-Forward phase, participants used what they learned in previous phases to plan and conduct their own workshops.

The program’s graduation and business pitching event will be held at the Hilton Hotel in Beirut on February 22, 2020.

About Citi Foundation: The Citi Foundation works to promote economic progress and improve the lives of people in low-income communities around the world. We invest in efforts that increase financial inclusion, catalyze job opportunities for youth, and reimagine approaches to building economically vibrant cities. The Citi Foundation’s “More than Philanthropy” approach leverages the enormous expertise of Citi and its people to fulfill our mission and drive thought leadership and innovation. For more information, visit www.citifoundation.com.

About AMIDEAST: AMIDEAST is a leading American non-profit organization engaged in international education, training and development activities in the Middle East and North Africa. AMIDEAST has operated continuously in Lebanon since 1968. AMIDEAST/Lebanon provides programs and services to people residing in Lebanon interested in exploring study opportunities abroad and enhancing their communications and managerial skills for personal and professional advancement. AMIDEAST has been offering entrepreneurship programs in Lebanon and the MENA region since 2011.

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