

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

Dear friends,

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the Bachoura public library, the first municipal public library of the city of Beirut.

Since that time, ASSABIL has grown and achieved a lot of dreams and goals. In brief, we now administer three municipal public libraries that have been visited by over half a million users during the last 20 years, provide cultural and educational services across Lebanon through our mobile library, and coordinate a large network of public libraries. That being said, we are constantly striving to achieve more.

Through all these years, we have stayed true to the association's values, and carried out its mission. One of the key values was to create a public space that provides culture for all members of our society thereby strengthening social cohesion. In my opinion, we have succeeded.

ASSABIL has evolved appropriately over time to adapt and respond to the rapidly changing role of public libraries and the emerging trends of communicating knowledge. We have done this by constantly reviewing and evaluating our book collections and the variety of cultural and educational activities that we offer. Our libraries have become lively cultural spaces where visitors from all ages, backgrounds, and interests can participate in a wide range of activities

Our country is currently passing through challenging times, both politically and financially, which we hope will soon bring justice and prosperity to all members of our beloved nation.

In the meantime, we will continue working hard to minimize the financial impact of these conditions on our association by trying to expand and diversify our partners and donors. I am certain that the experience of success over the past 22 years, ASSABIL's reputation as a champion of public libraries in Lebanon, and our wonderfully dedicated staff will sustain us through this difficult period.

I look forward to what we will be accomplishing together this year.

Ziad Bou Alwan
President of the Board

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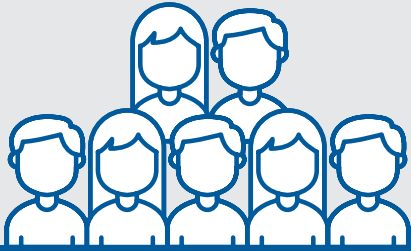
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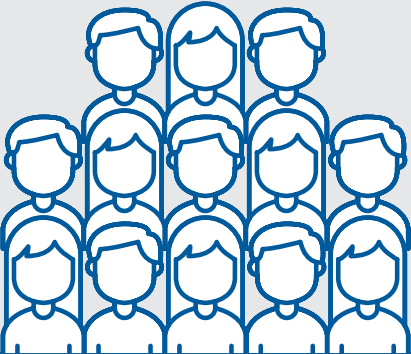
I don't know how I would have surpassed this difficult time of my life without the municipal public library of Monnot that I discovered through the librarian who I taught in high school. The books I borrowed were my escape and my only way of distraction to overcome my pain and sorrow during the long and painful period of chemotherapy.

*J. K.
Retired teacher from Monnot library*

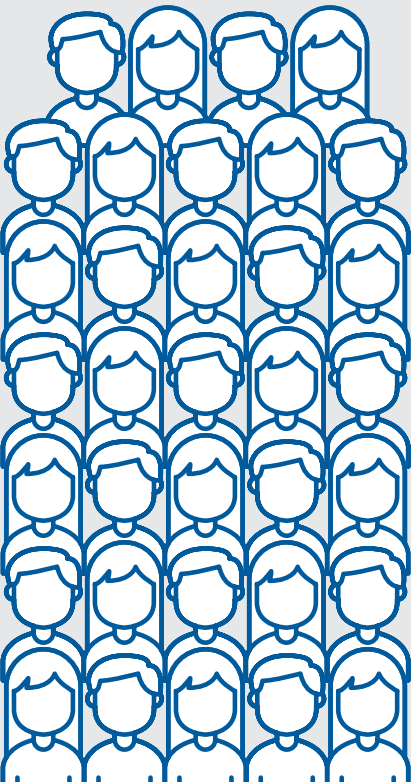




7 board members



13 full-time & part-time employees



34 members of General Assembly

ASSABIL AT A GLANCE

Our Vision

We envision an inclusive world where culture and knowledge drive individual development and social transformation.

Our Mission

As a non-sectarian NGO, we facilitate cultural participation and knowledge-sharing through public libraries and public spaces. We promote reading, unlock imaginations, and nurture critical thinking thereby promoting the development of well-informed communities, both citizens and residents.

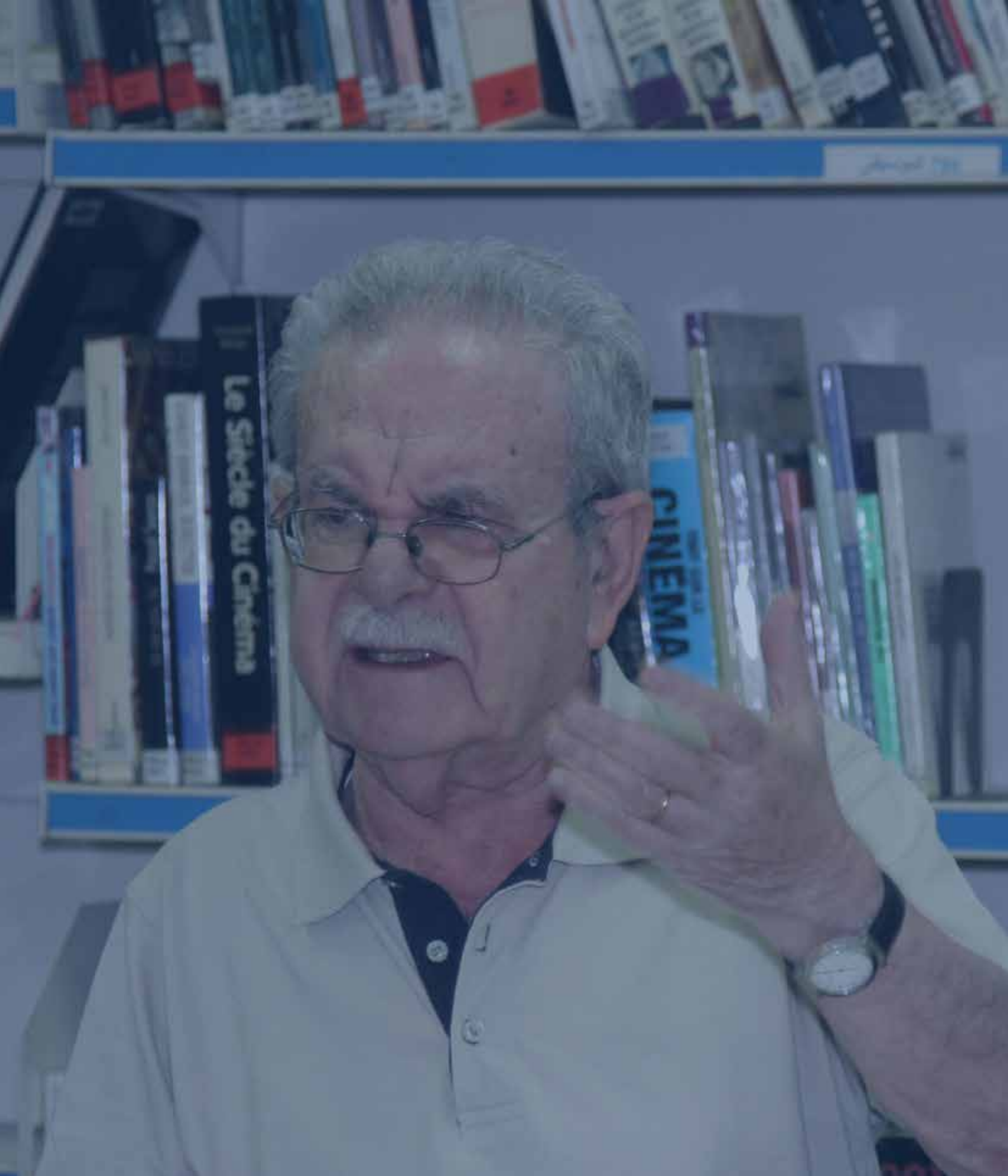
We develop capacities, network with community stakeholders, and share our expertise with public libraries, cultural actors, and educational institutions all over Lebanon. This work is to ensure that inclusive programming strategies are applied with state-of-the-art tools and equitable knowledge access to reach out to those most in need and encourage their active participation in civic life.

Our Objectives

Through the creation and operation of public libraries, ASSABIL seeks to contribute to the development of a well-informed and engaged citizenry and the formation of a secular and inclusive society in Lebanon.

Our activities fall within these areas:

Developing Public Libraries
Reading Promotion
Cultural Participation
Community Outreach
Capacity-Building
Advocacy and Lobbying



For the past 14 years, Elias Sahhab has shared his expertise as a music critic during ASSABIL's monthly Oriental Music Night at the Bachoura Municipal Library. This popular event is attended by a loyal audience that eagerly awaits this music night from one month to the next.



OUR LIBRARIES IN 2019

ASSABIL is commissioned by the Municipality of Beirut to manage and operate the municipal public libraries in the neighborhoods of Bachoura, Geitawi, and Monnot. We also operate a mobile library – the Kotobus – that visits public schools and childcare centers in marginalized areas, including Palestinian refugee camps.

Visitors



25,191 visits to Beirut's Municipal Public Libraries



128 visitors per day on average



51% of visitors are female

Subscribers

ASSABIL witnessed 423 new subscribers at the three libraries in 2019



17% Children



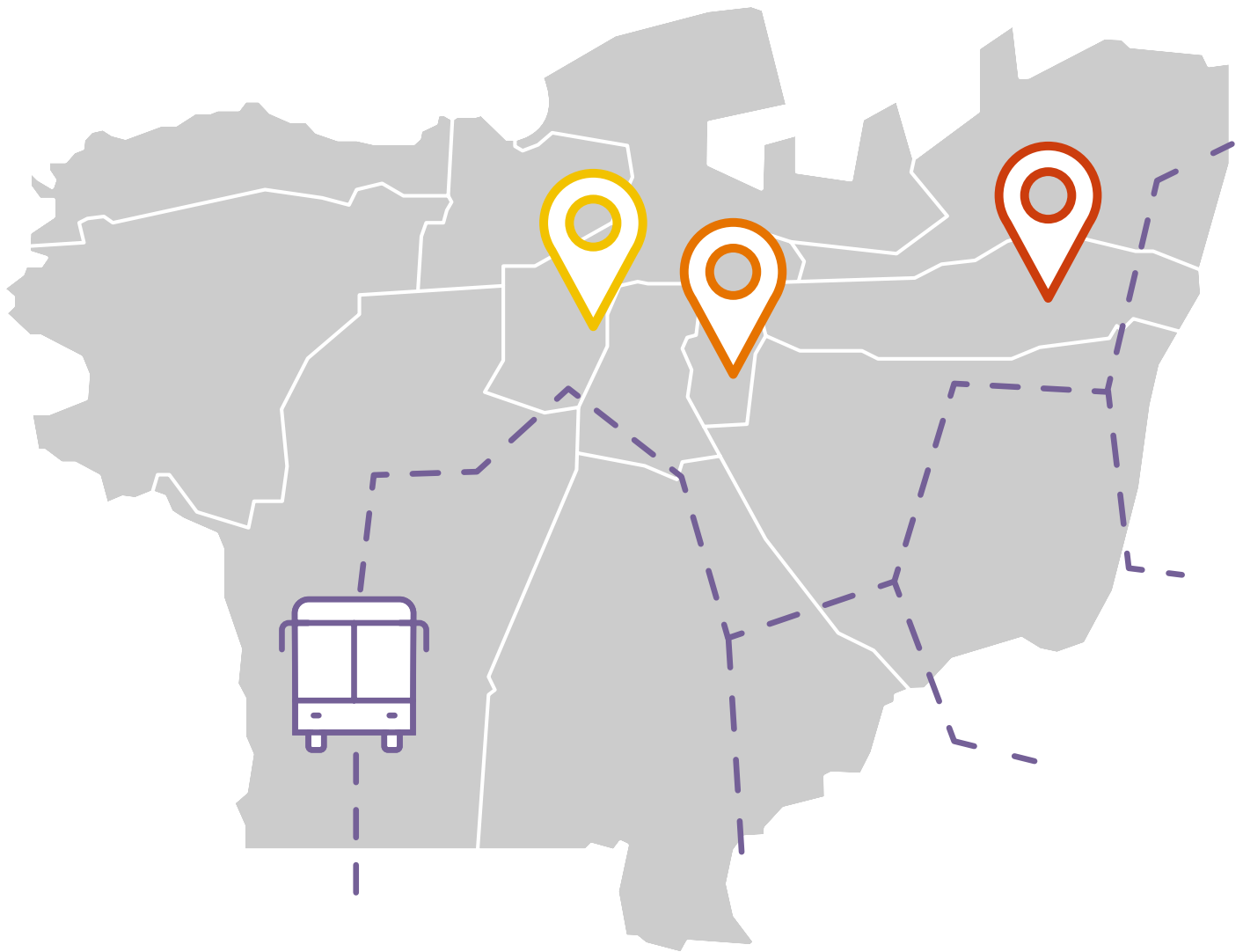
83% Adults



27% Men



73% Women



Bachoura

22,555 titles
Opened in 2000
10,987 visitors

Monnot

9,553 titles
Opened in 2004
5,114 visitors

Geitawi

8,355 titles
Opened in 2008
9,090 visitors

Kotobus

Mobile library
6,681 titles
On the road since 2008

Introducing digital reading:

Thanks to the CMA CGM Foundation, the library collections now include digital reading devices. Since September 2019, library users have been able to read and borrow e-books and access e-learning tools and educational games.



5,000 visits to online catalogue
21,752 pages viewed



20,953 books & other documents borrowed



47,144 documents in catalogue



READING PROMOTION

Working with Children

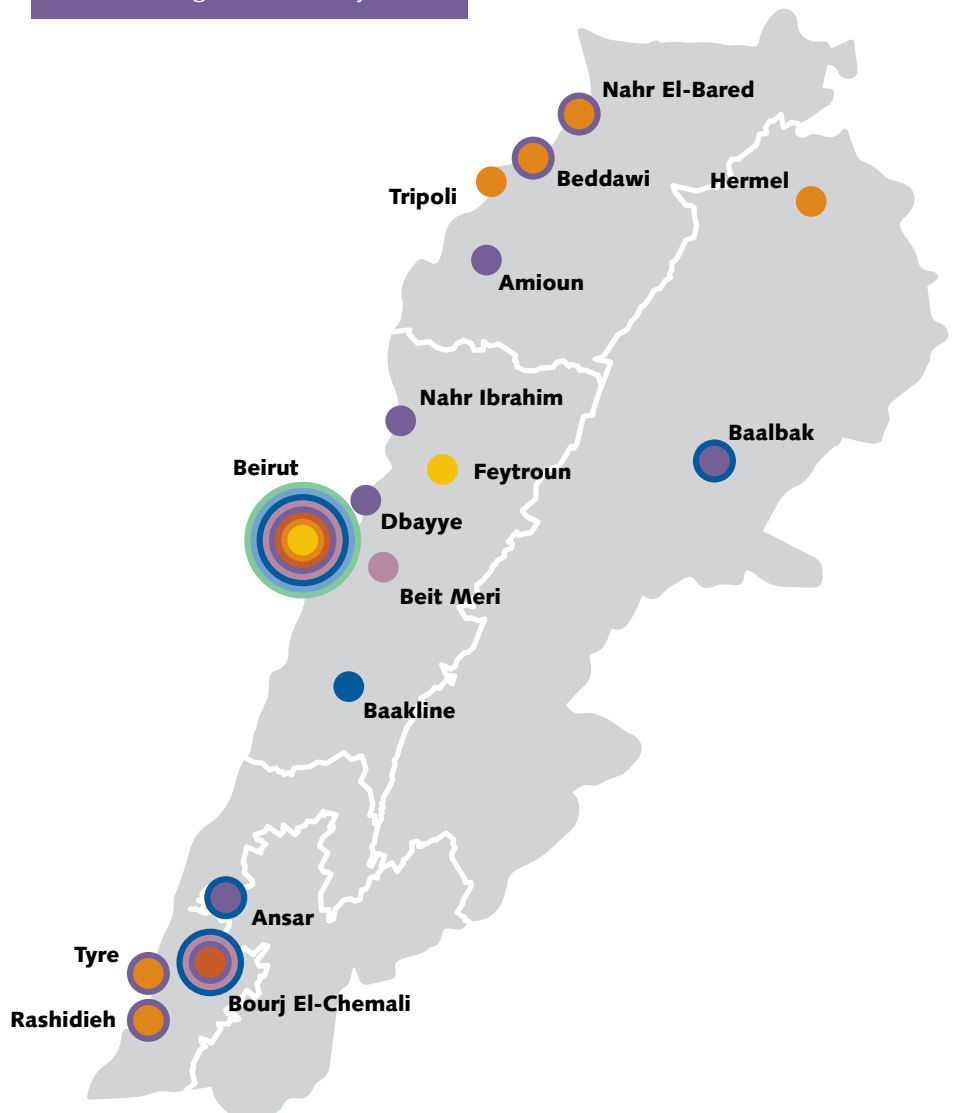
Our libraries and mobile library regularly welcome pupils from public and semi-private schools, as well as childcare and non-formal educational centers in Palestinian camps. Our activities focus on sparking a love of reading in students and raising awareness about different topics and problems in society (gender, the environment, children's rights, etc.). In 2019, our class reception program focused on tolerance, gender equality, and children rights. Students also got the chance to meet various authors and illustrators in person.

5,587 pupils & children
(3,287 girls, 2,300 boys)

Reading is Fun

Promoting a love of reading is one of the primary goals of our library programs. Our activities include weekly storytelling sessions, class reception, and an intensive program during National Reading Week, and monthly book clubs in Arabic and French. In 2019 we were delighted to receive the authors: Charif Majdalani, Georgia Makhoul, Hoda Attas, Jabbour Doueiry, Joumana Haddad, Mariam Chamas and Rami Zein.

3,414 children
(1,948 girls, 1,466 boys)
193 adults
(170 women, 23 men)



CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

Encouraging Free Creative Expression

Offering free creative workshops that are open to everyone is an important way to promote cultural participation. ASSABIL organized nine creative workshops dedicated to making use of recycled materials, with the support of CFLI/Canadian Embassy. The workshops took place in the Souheil Al Sabbagh Library of Bourj El Chemaly in Tyre, in the two Beirut Municipal Libraries of Geitawi and Bachoura, in Al Ghazali Library in Baalbeck, in Ishbilia Center in Tyre, and in Ghassan Kanafani Libraries in both Naher El Bared and Beddawi. A total of 126 individuals attended these events. In addition, throughout 2019, Lebanese poet Antoine Boulad facilitated regular creative writing workshops in the Beirut Municipal Libraries

80 participants

UNICEF Lebanon & ASSABIL

Our Kotobus team spent the second half of 2019 celebrating the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC). 2019 marked the 30th anniversary of the year when Lebanon made a historic commitment to the world's children by adopting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. ASSABIL's collaboration with UNICEF was launched on June 2019, 5 at UNICEF's Child Rights Festival in Horsch Beirut, during which more than 1,000 Lebanese, Palestinian, and Syrian children from across Lebanon enjoyed a day of activities varying

ASSABIL Annual Report 2019

A Varied Program of Cultural Activities

The municipal public libraries of Beirut organize weekly cultural activities in cooperation with local partner institutions and experts that are open to everyone and free of charge. Our cultural activities include monthly screenings of Lebanese movies in cooperation with Nadi Iekol Nas (with film directors in attendance), musical evenings featuring traditional Arab musicians as well as music from other parts of the world, debates and meetings with authors, concerts, roundtables, etc.

1,701 attendees
(1112 women, 589 men)

Hakawati Festival

This year we held the second celebration of what we hope will become an annual Arabic folktale festival in Lebanon. The festival was supported and funded by Taawon and organized in cooperation with Dar el-Nimr and several public libraries and cultural centers in Lebanon. The goal was to revive and promote the traditional Arabic art of storytelling. The festival featured performances that prompted a lively exchange of experiences between local and Arab artists. The 2019 edition featured famous Arab storytellers such as Samia Jaheen (Egypt), Saly Chalaby known by Hakawatya Chalabya (Jordan) and Emtinen Karray (Tunis).

1,500 participants

from interactive theater, storytelling, puppet shows, music, painting, and craft workshops. Through these activities, children were engaged and learned about their rights while having fun. After the kick-off event, we started organizing community events to promote CRC in the most vulnerable Lebanese areas. ASSABIL coordinated its activities with local NGOs and municipalities, as well as UNICEF field officers – together drawing maximum attendance and benefit for those children most in need. Where no library exists... the Kotobus is the

child's place to be – with up to 100 children at every event. Kotobus took the message further. Between June and December, 2019 40 child rights events were scheduled by UNICEF and ASSABIL.

4,500 participants



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Engaging the Community & Improving Social Cohesion

Making public libraries shared community spaces is at the center of our efforts. We work to build bridges and linkages between different population groups and strengthen social cohesion throughout Lebanon. Our initiatives in 2019 included a series of creative workshops (attended by 118 community members) on environmental awareness and recycling, drama therapy, nature crafts, and chocolate making as part of a project funded by Secours Catholique. To further engage communities within the libraries ASSABIL launched its own volunteering program at the Beirut Municipal Libraries funded by the Heinrich Boell Stiftung. The volunteering program in 2019 consisted of 55 young people who received specialized training on active citizenship, non-violent communication, active sensitivity, library management, digital content design, and writing scenarios for comic books. These individuals volunteered at our libraries, took on various responsibilities, and facilitated several activities that were open to the public.

402 community event participants
64 workshops participants

Public Libraries for Active Citizenship

In 2019, as part of promoting active citizenship and encouraging youth and women to “own” their neighborhood libraries and surrounding public spaces, ASSABIL trained and built the capacities of 20 community members on in-depth public initiative design, planning, and development. We plan to continue three joint initiatives in the Bachoura, Geitawi, and Monnot neighborhoods next year. This program is funded by Secours Catholique.

> 20 civil society organizations invited
20 participants

CAPACITY-BUILDING AND ADVOCACY

Training Programs

Building the capacity of library professionals throughout Lebanon is one of the primary goals of ASSABIL. In 2019 we offered four trainings targeting library professionals, volunteers, and storytellers:

Two-day training workshop on educational game development, conducted by Ana Aqra, funded by Heinrich Boell Stiftung. (12 participants: 2 men, 10 women)

One-day training workshop on writing scenarios for comic books conducted by Samandal Association, funded by Heinrich Boell Stiftung. (6 participants: 1 man, 5 women)

Two-day workshop on designing digital content and delivering a clear message using Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator, conducted by Mahmoud Tahhan and funded by Heinrich Boell Stiftung. (14 participants: 9 men, 5 women)

Five-day workshop for up-and-coming storytellers: Art of Hakawati and Vocals, conducted by Jihad Darwich and Khaled Al-Abdallah, funded by Taawon. (12 storytellers: 4 men, 8 women)

Expertise for Municipalities

In 2019, ASSABIL's expertise was sought on multiple occasions. It was asked by the Municipality of Ghobeiry (in the southern suburbs of Beirut) to provide expertise and assist in setting up their new municipal libraries. ASSABIL prepared a study for the Municipality of Ghobeiry that included the library concept, plan of the library with different sections, furniture and equipment, the organizational chart, library system specifications, acquisition policy, and the BOQ.

I first started visiting Bachoura and Monot libraries with my parents when I was in middle school. I enjoyed not only the cozy environment that fostered my love of books, but the open space to study for my exams. ASSABIL's public libraries is where my passion for public space and community engagement was born.

Rouba Al-Rafei
Project Manager at ASSABIL

Promoting Arabic Youth Literature

In cooperation with the Boghossian Foundation, ASSABIL awards the Boghossian/ASSABIL Prize for Children's Literature to illustrators and authors of Arabic youth literature. The 2019 award recognized the achievements of manuscripts in the young reader category (ages 8 to 12). The jury consisted of Antoine Boulad, Hasmig Chahinian, and Samah Idris. ASSABIL greatly appreciates the effort of the jury members throughout this process. The jury developed a rigorous evaluation criteria to review and select awardees. In the end the committee chose Lena Merhej (illustration) and Mays Dagher (text) for their book "the legend" published by Al Hadaek Group. The 2020 Boghossian/ASSABIL Prize will be dedicated to manuscripts targeting young readers (ages 13 to 16).

International Women's Day

In collaboration with the Canadian Embassy, ASSABIL celebrated International Women's Day. The celebration involved Grade 10 students from six public schools – Aman Kabbara Chaarany School, Nadia Aoun School, Sobhi Mahmasany School, Fakhereddine School, Amir Chakib Erslane School, and Ghobeiry First Verdun School. A total of 60 students presented their research at the Bachoura Municipal Library on March 8th in the presence of her Excellency Ambassador Emmanuelle Lamoureux. The student presentations included the biography and work of five women from different countries who have distinguished themselves in their fields (Simone de Beauvoir, Laure Moghayzel, Corinne Gallant, Doria Shafiq, and Judith Butler).

The student research was exhibited in various public places, in the Barbir, Sassine, Hamra, Damascus Road, and Mousseitbé neighborhoods. The lives and struggles of these pioneers taught our young researchers that "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman."

Institutional Developments

During 2019, ASSABIL was hard at work further developing our mission, vision, and overall association strategy. This work was done by the Administrative Committee, staff, and an external consultant. The support from an external consultant, Ghiwa Mikdashi, enabled us to draft a five-year strategic plan. We hope to launch the strategy in early 2020.

الأسطورة

قصة مصورة لليافعين

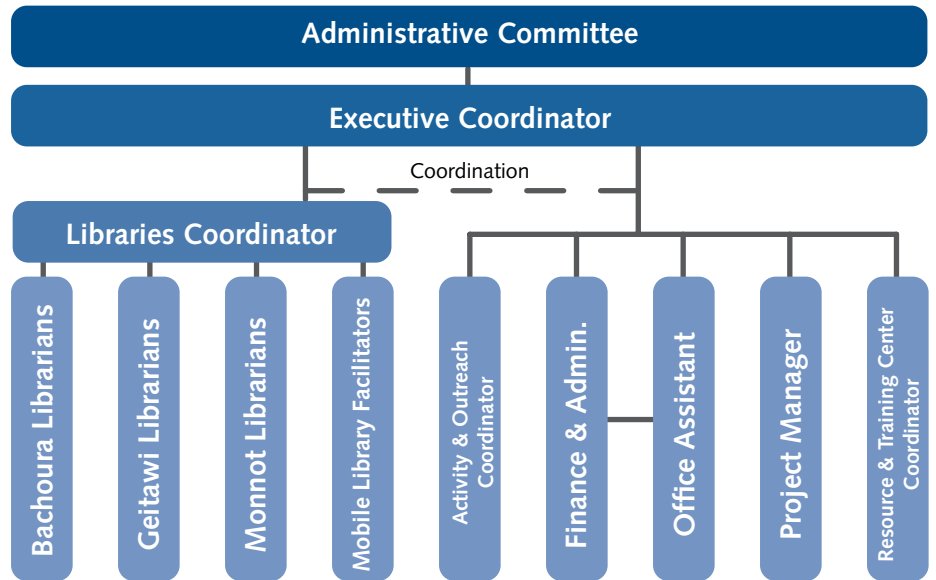


Having worked many years on children's books in Lebanon, I cannot express more how happy I am to be awarded and recognized for «the Legend» (الاسطورة، 2019، دار الحداثق)، particularly because it is a comic book, in Arabic, and for children – a rarity that I did not have as a child. I am doubly honored to have been awarded the prestigious Boghossian prize and by the relentless Assabil Association because of their ongoing efforts to support and promote excellence in cultural production and exchange. Many greetings to ASSABIL regulars and not-so-regulars: I hope you too like the book!

Lena Merhej



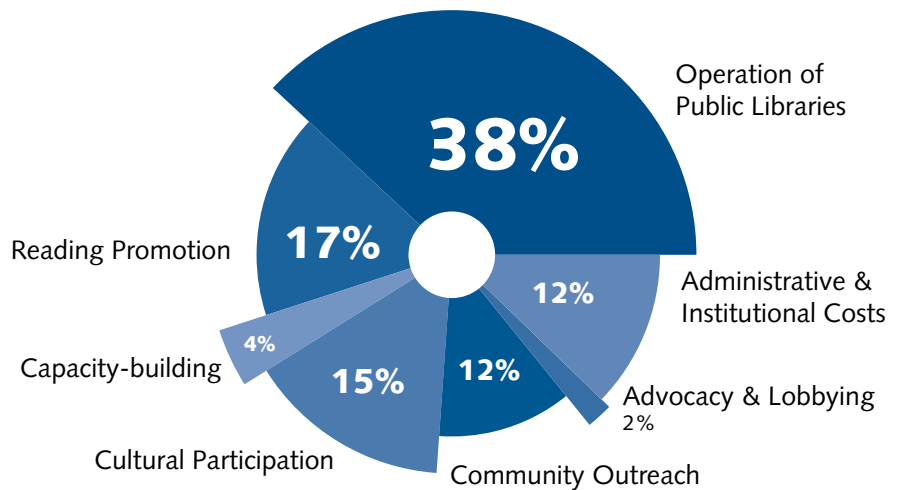
ORGANIZATION AND FINANCES



Annual Budget

The total annual budget of 2019 was 490,640 USD.

The following is the breakdown:



Funding Partners

Municipality of Beirut, Ministry of Culture, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Taawon, Fund for Local Initiatives / Canadian Embassy, Secours Catholique – Caritas France, Institut Français, Boghossian Foundation, CMA CGM Foundation, UNICEF, and individuals donors.



“

I came with my 3 kids aged 2, 5 and 7. We spent a beautiful time here, the kids played and sang and learned new things. It's great to see the biggest green space in Beirut open to the public and hosting fun and educational activities! Please keep doing such events.

Dima

Attended Child Rights day organized by ASSABIL and funded by UNICEF at Horsh Beirut

”

ASSABIL

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