

ANNUAL REPORT 2022



LIBRARIES FLOURISH
IN TIMES OF CRISES





MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

In a country in perpetual crisis at all levels, culture is a political and social force to create dialogue and change, establish a culture of critical thinking and pave the way to a better future.

Since 1997, ASSABIL was an active partner in the Beiruty cultural and social life. In the last three years, our presence is expanding, reaching a wider and more diversified audience, and creating a deeper relationship with visitors and neighboring communities.

Developed and promoted as cultural community centers, our three libraries welcomed and served more than 32000 visitors, and offered around 300 different activities in 2022.

Our venture in tutoring and offering educational support for young students, that started online in 2021, and continued in physical presence after corona, highlights our commitment to our society; our public libraries are not only open spaces offering free access to culture, information and resources, but are also, and mainly, an active partner in creating opportunities for access to culture and knowledge. Our aim for the coming years is to develop more this initiative and invest in a more informed and educated younger generation.

This commitment to the community is strengthened through the diverse partnership and collaboration we're establishing with different associations and centers in Beirut and other cities and regions in Lebanon.

We would like to thank all the visitors of our libraries, the attendees of our activities, the great volunteers who are always present and supportive; all this warm and appreciation motivates us to continue our work and develop it in the most innovative possible way.

See you all in our libraries in Bachoura, Geitawi and Monot... and if you see a bus with a library design driving next to you on the street, this is also ASSABIL and its famous Mobile library.

Cathy Khattar
President of the Board

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I am Aya Tarran, the mother of Zayn. I'm so glad that my friend introduced me to Assabil library.

We've visited the library 4 times so far, and my son said that it's one of his most favourite experiences ever, because he enjoys reading. I'm so happy we have the option to borrow stories, and the storytelling session, an activity provided by Assabil team, is one of our activities. I wish this concept is available all over Lebanon. Thank you!

Aya Tarran
Monnot library patron





DESPITE THE CRISES, LIBRARIES STRIVE AND FLOURISH

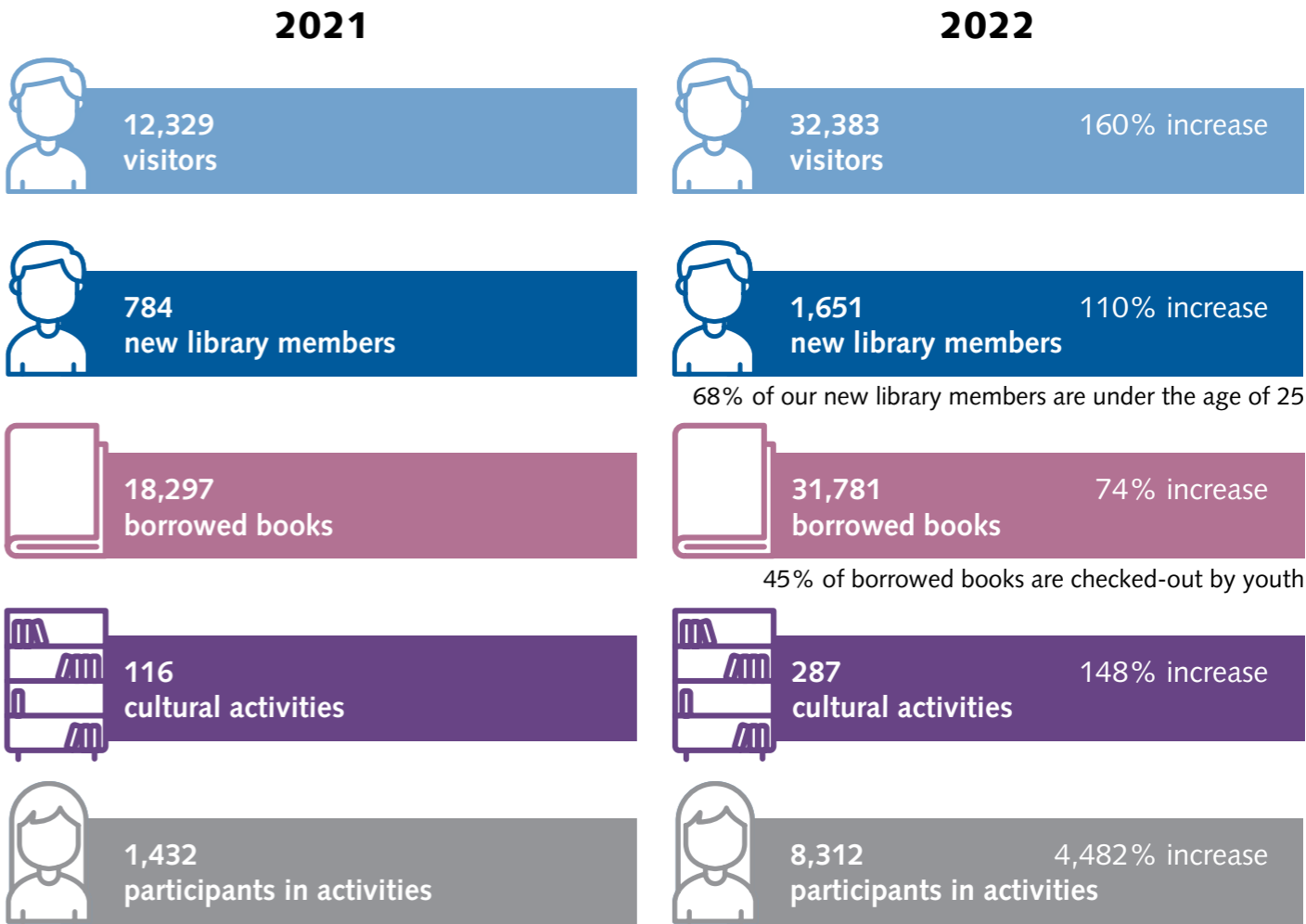
2022 was a challenging and difficult year for Lebanon and its citizens; social, economic and political uncertainties prevailed, putting in risk of need and poverty a growing number of community members.

Culture and arts were no more a priority for most of people, donors and civil society associations, compared to other more stressing and urgent needs.

For ASSABIL, this was the time the association was needed the most; providing free and accessible safe cultural spaces for all beneficiaries, providing educational support and access to knowledge and resources, securing an escapade to all those still believing in culture as a mean for a better life and well-being.

Throughout 2022, our libraries broadened their outreach and work scope, bringing enormous efforts to support wider audiences and local communities and to serve the massive needs that remain persisting in our society. We have rooted our priorities in re-establishing library-patron relationships that have been drastically disrupted by the COVID19- pandemic, as well as in increasing our free services to better serve our visitors and audience.

This contribution led to considerable growth in the operations' performance of the Beirut Municipal Public Libraries' services; data analysis shows an exceptional increase in the numbers of daily visitors, new library members, borrowed books, as well as activities. This growth in numbers was met with equal efforts from ASSABIL' staff and librarians, in order to better serve all the needs of the library patrons.



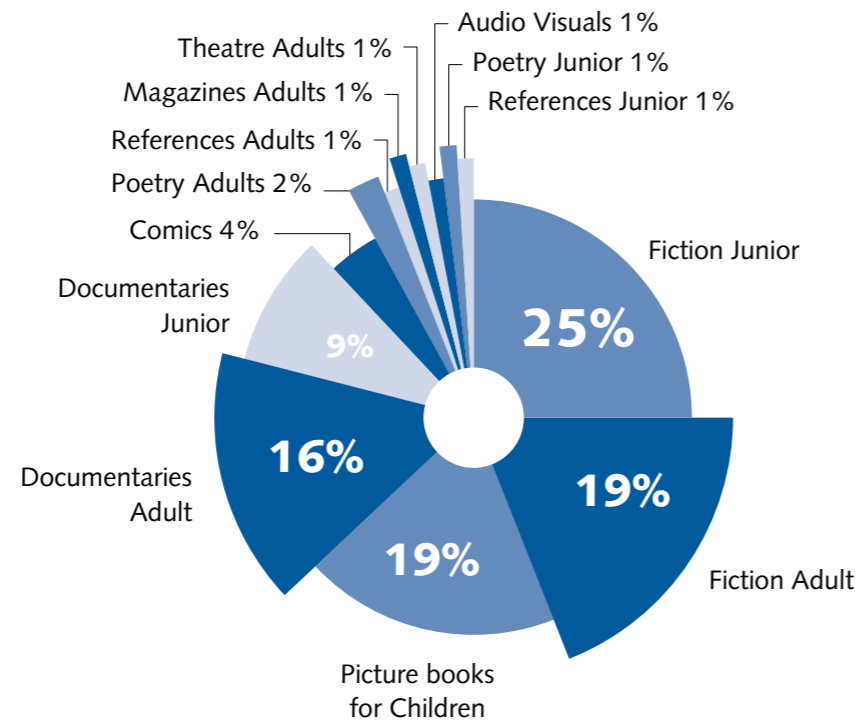
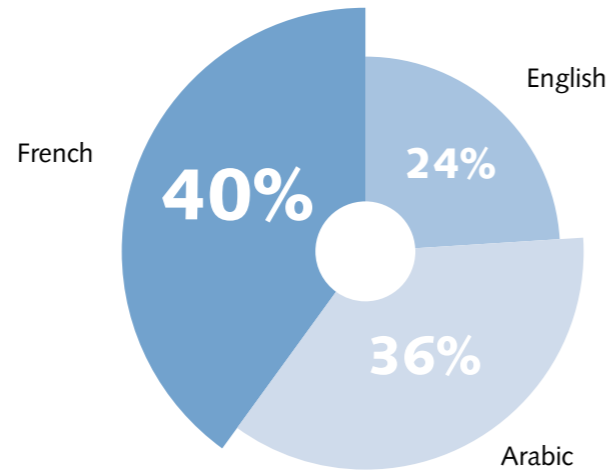


To respond to this increase in the number of visitors, and despite the economic crisis, our libraries managed to respond to our readers' direct needs by providing free access to:

55,000 books at the three libraries

3,500 new books added to our collection

13,000 books distributed free of charge to school libraries, public libraries, university libraries, and NGOs all across Lebanon, thanks to the generous donations made by several entities inside and out of Lebanon



ASSABIL provide a rich and diversified collection of books, mainly in Arabic, French and English, in addition of a smaller collection in Spanish and Italian.

Despite the limited resources available, ASSABIL is making efforts to rebalance the distribution of its books' collection by language, keeping into consideration the needs and preferences of its audience



The Library is an amazing place to go read, study, and meet people. It represents a community that has encouraged me to continue reading at a time when books got expensive, and a community space that provides electricity and internet to study.

Sarah Geitawi library patron



CULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS

In 2022, the public libraries witnessed a significant growth in outreach and an increase in activities, especially that COVID restrictions were lifted after more than 20 months, and people were able to access public spaces again. ASSABIL managed to open the libraries for 7 days per week, with the support of a network of volunteers committed to the mission and vision of the association.

In addition to the open space itself offering free access to books, magazines and access to internet, the three libraries in Bachoura, Geitawi and Monnot offered a rich and diversified program of cultural activities that took into consideration the diversity of our audience and visitors in term of interest, cultural background and age.

The number of activities implemented in 2022 increased by 148%, reaching 287 activities, with more than 8312 participants, compared to 1432 last year.

Monthly Programmed Activities

11 meetings of Arabic Book Club, 11 meetings of English Book Club & 14 meetings of French Book Club; discovering 35 authors & gathering 335 participants.

Weekly children storytelling sessions with 24 animators and attended by 2200 child.

Authors' encounters and discovery of 5 newly published books

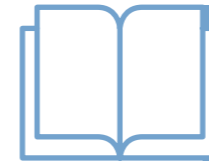
One Reading night with 6 participants

Ciné-Club and screening of 16 films followed by discussions with the directors, in partnership with Nadi Lekol Nas and gathering 371 participants

Celebration of Important Days



International Women's day



Arabic Language Day celebration with a dictation competition 26 participants & a tribute to late writer & author Samah Idriss attended by 42 participants



Fête de la Musique with RAP artists : Amer Makarem a.k.a OD, Theo a.k.a قلاق and the Armenian choir Hamazkayen. attended by 400 participants

The Human Library

This year, a new and innovative activity was introduced to the libraries; The Human Library aims at offering the possibility for selected people to become an open book, to turn the pages of their lives, to tell their story to a reader who will listen without prejudice, with the goal of creating, during 20 minutes, a space for personal dialogue on topics that are often difficult to talk about.

70 participants met with 8 persons

Creative Workshops

In 2022, ASSABIL organized 8 creative workshops, targeting mainly the younger audience. The 100 participants had the chance to attend various sessions, increase their cultural knowledge and receive artistic vocational start-up kits in Latin calligraphy, storytelling training, wool crochet, up cycling, origami and Mandala art.

In addition, 10 creative writing workshops in French were held in our libraries gathering 100 participants. In December the newest monthly Arabic creative workshop was also launched.

Translation Club

Translation was always an acclaimed and interesting cultural activity allowing the discovery of new texts, authors and mainly culture. In 2022, the Translation club was launched with the Nigerian writer Jamiu Abiola, inviting participants to translate texts from English to Arabic, and vice versa.

Via a WhatsApp group, the 77 members had to translate a text sent every other day, receive the correction the second day with interactive feedback.

The International Translation Day, September 30, was celebrated at the Bachoura Library in a translation contest in which the Club members participated.





Promoting Arabic Youth Literature and Arabic language

ASSABIL/Boghossian Prize

In cooperation with the *Boghossian Foundation*, ASSABIL organizes the *Boghossian/ASSABIL Prize* for Arabic youth literature yearly. In 2022, the prize was dedicated to manuscripts targeting young readers between the ages of 13 and 15, as well as published books targeting children between the ages of 8 and 12.

The jury awarded the prize to Dr. Antoine Chartouni for the story "Little white cloud" published by Dar Al Fikr Al Loubnani, and to Nassim Alwan for the manuscript "An Identity on the Wing of a Dream"

SAWA: A Periodical Published by ASSABIL

ASSABIL continues publishing SAWA, the new quarterly periodical introduced in May 2021 to promote the Arabic language among young people between the ages of 11 and 15. The periodical, Sawa (Together in Arabic), is distributed in 6 schools, and is available at the 3 municipal libraries for all visitors, and as an e-copy downloadable directly from our website.



الإصدار الثاني
لـ "سوا"

ASSABIL wishes to thank all the facilitators, speakers, guests and authors who took part in or moderated events in 2022:

Film directors and facilitators: Sarah Qasqas, Hadi Zakkak, Ali Naha, Chadi Hazimeh, Adham Dimachki, Youmna Itani, Ghina Abboud, Nicolas Khoury, Dalal Dimachkieh, Jean-Pierre Maalouf, Jad Abou Jawdeh, Randa Chahal Sabbagh, Diala Qachmar, Salim Saab, Bahij Houjeij and Naja Achkar

Authors and facilitators: Ralph Doumit, Salma Kojok, Sophie Guignon, Sélim Nassib, Antoine Boulad, Jamiu Abiola

Panorama of the Art speakers: Dr. Maha Aziza Sultan

Book Clubs facilitators: Antoine Boulad, Suzanne El Amine, Randa Sbeii

Storytellers and children literature writers: Samar Barraaj, Sanaa Chabbani, Nataly Sabbagh, Fatima Charafeddine, Amal Nasser, Noura Kalache

Musicians: singer Nisreen Humaidan, Overdose- Ala (قلق), Hassan El-Abou, Hmazkein Art School, George Khoury

Handcrafts' session animator: Donia Al Koussa

Writing workshop animators; Antoine Boulad and Ali Sabbagh

ASSABIL/Boghossian Prize jurors; Antoine Boulad, Najla Khoury and Georgia Makhlof

Volunteers: Feryal Solh, Fatmeh Solh, Ghinwa Saleh, Joumana Rifaï, Sundus Al Rifai, Khalida Eid and Claude Karam.

Horsh Beirut Festival 2022

The Horsh Beirut Festival took place in its seventh edition on Saturday September 10 and Sunday September 11, 2022, after being forcefully discontinued for three years (2019, 2020, and 2021) due to the different situations that the country was witnessing, from the economic collapse to the COVID pandemic to the August 4 Beirut explosion. To kick off the launching of the Horsh Beirut Festival, the festival was preceded by a set of cultural activities which took place between September 5 and 9.

The Horsh Festival is an annual festival held in Beirut's largest public park, bringing together people from different backgrounds, communities, and generations to enjoy this green public space and participate in a variety of free cultural and recreational activities that speak to all. The program included artistic, cultural and musical performances for children, adults and youth.

This event aims at offering the public the opportunity to discover this park, and to revive its tradition as a festive place for meetings between the inhabitants of the city, a tradition that continued until the war of 1975. The seventh edition of the festival was organized by ASSABIL - Culture for All, and was supported by the City of Avignon and the association Djeliya Internationale, the Embassy of France in Lebanon and the Association Taawon-Lebanon.

This edition was a great success, not short from expectations, even though it was held with 30% less funding than previous years. Its success is attributed to the dedicated Assabil team and the accomplished plan in place to avoid any technical, logistic or security issues, as well as the great media coverage of the event. 3,600 people from around the city and other areas attended the 2022 festival shows.



Attending the 2022 Horsh Beirut Festival was a heartwarming experience after a three-year hiatus. The park came alive with cultural performances, exhibitions, and a sense of unity that transcended Lebanon's recent challenges. It was a testament to the power of culture and community to heal and bring people together.

Aya Ayoub
Horsh Festival attendee



SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

ASSABIL believes in reinforcing its role as an actively engaged association, be it in the programs implemented or in the networking with other associations rooted in their communities.

B.1 Respecting the Environment

Respecting the environment is an essential variable in the sustainable development of our communities. It is not a statement or a one-shot activity, but rather a constant effort to change our way of living and our attitude toward the world around us.

Years ago, ASSABIL committed to take this journey; recycling and re-using materials, respecting energy usage, avoiding the use of plastic are measures among others that we're keen to respect. The team participated in different trainings and workshop regarding this issue.

In the last years, and in accordance with an international trend and interest, we started to provide our libraries with solar energy panels, mainly for Bachoura and Geitawi libraries. In 2022, we were able to secure %60 of our needs in electricity with solar renewable energy. This change came at a very challenging time locally with the country suffering from shortage in electricity supply, putting our work and sustainability at risk. Once again, ASSABIL proves to be a leading example in searching and implementing innovative approaches towards environment friendly energy sources, with very minimal resources.

Outdoor Furniture Geitawi

On another note, and in order to offer more space to the public of the Geitawi public library, we equipped the outdoor section of the library locate in the Jesuit garden with comfortable and beautiful furniture that ensures the comfort of the visitors without affecting their intersection with the library itself or other visitors.

This new set-up allowed for new innovative community activities and meetings, community games such as chess, backgammon and others, in addition to a distinguish reading experience in the garden.

B.2 Partnership With Other Associations

In April 2022, the mobile library "Kotobus", launched a partnership collaboration with Mouvement Social. The Kotobus team trained around 20 volunteers from Mouvement Social in different regions throughout the Bekaa and Beirut, on programming and executing cultural activities for kids. The Kotobus team focused in their training on increasing the dynamics of interacting with children through puppets to encourage them to read. In addition, they facilitated a series of activities for around 100 children in multiple Mouvement Social centers in Zahle, Saida and Beirut.

ASSABIL is also keen on collaborating with other associations and NGOs to transform the libraries into open and inclusive urban spaces in Beirut. This year, the association joined efforts with Himaya, Medair, Amel, Idraac and Movement Social to support less privileged communities by hosting numerous psychosocial support and awareness. Those sessions gave the chance to 250 participants to meet with experts and professionals and discuss critical and challenging topics such as violence against women, child protection in the libraries and others.

B.3 Promoting Inclusive Governance

Promoting inclusive governance at the local level for women, youth and refugees was one of 2022 main projects that we worked on with 5 libraries in 5 villages/ regions in Lebanon.

The project's main goal was to achieve overall social equality through training women and youth of different communities on overcoming the barriers facing the political participation of women and youth through communication tools and through music.

This accomplishment was realized through dedicated workshops that benefited 250 participants across the five libraries:

1. Debate Club

Led by debate expert Raji Saeed, this workshop engaged 75 participants. It was followed by five subsequent visits to each location, aimed at refining debate skills and preparing for the final events topics.

2. Inclusive Governance

Facilitated by Cyril Badaoui, this workshop involved 125 participants. It delved into a range of topics, including an introduction to Inclusive Governance and Inclusion, discussions on Reality, Equality, Equity, and Liberation.

3. Rap

Under the guidance of Jaafar Toufar, this workshop catered to 50 participants. It focused on crafting lyrics to match rhythm and the art of performing Rap music.



The Debate Club is a necessity as it allows us to evaluate our knowledge of talking objectively about current issues, while being able to support our points of view, and further analyzing and justifying our points of view. Critical thinking is incorporated within various sides, which maintains that all viewpoints are equally represented. In addition, in the club, I met new friends, with whom I can express my opinions and inclinations without judgment.

Ali Assaf
Bachoura library patron





EDUCATION AS AN ESSENTIAL TOOL FOR DEVELOPMENT

The social and political crisis in Lebanon, as well as the Covid 19 pandemic, have seriously disrupted school studies and weighed on families, forced to provide technological and informational resources to allow their children to continue their studies as best they can. This situation widens social gaps even further, and endangers the future of an entire generation. During such crisis, public libraries, whose role is to participate in the realization of the knowledge society, must participate more actively in the education of the members of the community.

Tutoring Program

The Tutoring program was launched at ASSABIL three libraries, in partnership with public and semi-private schools, to provide support to students, ensuring that those children are capable of continuing their studies and avoid dropping out or failing their school year. The retention sessions were tailored according to needs' assessments, and made to equip children in schools with a set of needed skills, knowledge, and human values and ethics that are the foundations of social change.

The program is in line with our vision that public libraries complement the school in its role to disseminate knowledge, education, and literacy to the community. The program distinctive results and impact was possible due to the support and dedication of 6 volunteer teachers and moderators.

Round Table On Teaching Arabic Language

With a strong belief in the importance of quality education being a fundamental right for all children, and part of stressing the importance of Arabic language in Lebanon's educational system, Assabil hosted a roundtable discussion on the 10th of December 2022, under the title: Progress of the Arabic language in schools. The meeting featured high-level speakers, including mentors and educators specialized in Arabic pedagogy. Experts, policy makers, and education specialists working in the field of education gathered to discuss the importance of and priorities of the Arabic language in primary curricula, and how to enhance such programs.

The overall objectives of the roundtable were to:

- Identify difficulties and challenges in teaching Arabic language in primary schools;
- Discuss the importance of core issues in progressing teaching Arabic;
- Present and discuss tools and good practices in moving towards a more productive and innovative way of teaching Arabic;
- Formulate the capacity needs and tool kits to help teach Arabic through recreational activities;

By the end of the sessions, the participants came out with the main discussions' outcomes: the necessity to develop the listening and oral communication skills of the pupils, and they agreed on the need for workshops on learning strategies and active teaching methods

Assabil Public Municipal Library is my second home. The library, in my opinion, is the most beautiful place, where I go to study and read books. I will always carry with me the beautiful memories I made at the library.

*Soha al Wahab
Bachoura library patron*



ASSABIL AT A GLANCE

ASSABIL Association (ASSABIL) is a non-governmental organization founded in 1997 to establish and promote public libraries and open cultural spaces in Lebanon. By creating public spaces for reading and culture, ASSABIL vowed to fill a void following the Lebanese Civil War, thus responding to a 'social necessity'. At ASSABIL, we envision an inclusive world where culture and knowledge drive individual development and social transformation.

ASSABIL three libraries are open 6 days per week for visitors and members, regardless of any religious, race, age or socio-economic background. Visitors are invited to

ASSABIL seeks to encourage people of all ages, religions, and socio-economic and educational backgrounds to benefit from their various services. Our public libraries are a local gateway to information and knowledge, with a free access to around 50,000 books, magazines and on-line resources.

The Bachoura library was the first to be established in the year 2001, followed by the opening of libraries in Geitawi-Jesuit Garden (2004) and in Monot, close to the USJ campus (2008). ASSABIL is commissioned by the Municipality of Beirut to manage and operate the municipal public libraries in the neighborhoods of Bachoura, Geitawi and Monnot. The year 2008 also witnessed the launch of the mobile library, Kotobus, which mainly serves public schools and non-formal education centers in need in remote areas.

In 2022, ASSABIL was proud to work with a dedicated, active, and diverse group of 12 community members who responded to our call for volunteers. In such hard times, the volunteers provided invaluable assistance in re-shelving, book binding, and organizing activities. Their help was vital to our libraries' ability to effectively and efficiently meet the needs of our community patrons. That valuable network of volunteers allowed the association to open on Sundays, starting December 2022, and welcome all visitors in Bachoura and Geitawi library from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm.

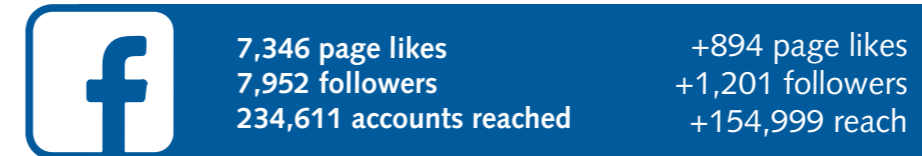
The Kotobus regularly welcomes children and students from childcare and informal educational centers, in Beirut and various regions and villages throughout Lebanon, in addition to its active presence in Palestinian gatherings and camps, with a clear mission to spread culture and literacy for variety of communities. Activities focus on encouraging the younger ones on reading and raising awareness.



Communication and Visibility

During 2022 ASSABIL engaged intensively with its audiences, developing its communication strategy and enhancing its visibility in order to promote the services and activities offered to the public.

Through our various social media channels, visitors and users were regularly updated about cultural events held at the libraries, provided services and latest additions to the books' collection.



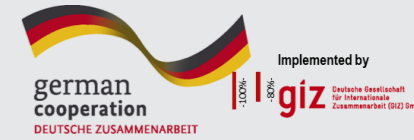
Financials

Yearly budget: 200,000.00 USD

Donors: Secours Catholiques-Caritas France, GIZ, Mouvement Social, CFLI-Canadian Embassy, Taawon association, COSV, Djeliya-Internationale, COBIAC, BookAid international, Boghossian Foundation, Ambassade de France.

Main partners: Beirut Municipality and Governorate

Partners: Nadi IkolNas, Himaya, Medair, Liqaa (community gathering of geitawi), Tri-pulley, Madanyat, Beirut Heritage Association



“
From the first day I walked into the library, the books in their different genres and themes caught my attention. The library helped me find the book I really like to read from the large and varied collection of books available there. I felt the books calling me, as if they were a part of my soul hidden on one of the shelves, and it was like I found friends among the pages of the books. They became the source of information that built and shaped my personality and made me see life in a different light. I count the days, day after day, to come back for my book. I loved it, and the greatest joy was to find a new book to borrow. Here, I found all the books I was looking for. The books classification and shelving is very easy and neat.
 ”

Eva
Bachoura library patron

ASSABIL

Ras el-Nabeh, Mohammad el-Hout Street
Naoura Bldg. 1st floor
Beirut – Lebanon

T +961 1 664 647
M +961 70 109 979
www.assabil.com

