

Document of  
The World Bank

Report No: NCO00003591

NOTE ON CANCELLED OPERATION REPORT  
(IBRD-82650)

ON A

LOAN

IN THE AMOUNT OF  
US\$ 6.4 MILLION EQUIVALENT

TO THE

THE REPUBLIC OF LEBANON

FOR A

MOBILE INTERNET ECOSYSTEM PROJECT

December 1, 2015

Transport and ICT Global Practice  
Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria Country Management Unit  
Middle East and North Africa Region

## CURRENCY EQUIVALENTS

(Exchange Rate Effective December 1, 2015)

Currency Unit = Lebanese Pound (LBP)  
LBP 1505.5 = \$1  
\$0.0007 = LBP 1

### FISCAL YEAR

January 1 – December 31

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CD	Country Director
CMU	Country Management Unit
COM	Council of Ministers
CPS	Country Partnership Strategy
ENoLL	European Network of Living Labs
FPMT	Financial and Procurement Management Team
FPPM	Financial and Procurement Project Manager
GDP	Gross domestic product
GoL	Government of Lebanon
IBRD	International Bank of Reconstruction and Development
ICT	Information communication technologies
IT	Information Technology
ITES	Information Technology Enabled Services
KWBPF	Korean World Bank Partnership Facility
LA	Loan Agreement
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MENA	Middle East North Africa (Region)
MICs	Mobile Internet competitions
MiHub	Mobile Innovation Hub
MoT	Ministry of Telecommunications
MoF	Ministry of Finance
NOC	Notification of Cancellation
PAD	Project Appraisal Document
PDO	Project development objective
WB	World Bank Group

Vice President: Hafez M. H. Ghanem  
Country Director: Ferid Belhaj  
Sector Manager: Boutheina Guermazi  
Project Team Leader: Victor Mulas  
NCO Team Leader: Cecilia Paradi-Guilford

**REPUBLIC OF LEBANON**  
**Mobile Internet Ecosystem Project**

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A. Basic Information			
Country:	Lebanon	Project Name:	LB: Mobile Internet Ecosystem Project (MIEP)
Project ID:	P131202	L/C/TF Number(s):	IBRD-82650
NCO Date:	08/27/2015		
Lending Instrument:	SIL	Borrower:	GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON
Original Total Commitment:	USD 6.40M	Disbursed Amount:	USD 0.00M
Revised Amount:	USD 6.40M		
<b>Environmental Category: C</b>			
<b>Implementing Agencies:</b> Ministry of Telecommunications			
<b>Cofinanciers and Other External Partners:</b>			

B. Key Dates				
Process	Date	Process	Original Date	Revised / Actual Date(s)
Concept Review:	05/10/2012	Effectiveness:	10/30/2015	
Appraisal:	09/27/2012	Closing:	12/31/2017	August 23, 2015
Approval:	07/31/2013			

C. Ratings Summary	
<b>Performance Rating by NCO</b>	
Outcomes:	Not Applicable
Risk to Development Outcome:	Not Applicable
Bank Performance:	Moderately Satisfactory
Borrower Performance:	Moderately Satisfactory

D. Sector and Theme Codes		
	Original	
<b>Sector Code (as % of total Bank financing)</b>		
Information technology	80	
Telecommunications	20	
<b>Theme Code (as % of total Bank financing)</b>		
Education for the knowledge economy	61	

e-Services	39	
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<b>E. Bank Staff</b>		
<b>Positions</b>	<b>At NCO</b>	<b>At Approval</b>
Vice President:	Hafez M. H. Ghanem	Inger Andersen
Country Director:	Ferid Belhaj	Ferid Belhaj
Practice Manager/Manager:	Boutheina Guerhazi	Randeep Sudan
Project Team Leader:	Victor Mulas	Victor Mulas
NCO Team Leader:	Cecilia Paradi-Guilford	

### **F. Ratings of Project Performance in ISRs**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Date ISR Archived</b>	<b>DO</b>	<b>IP</b>	<b>Actual Disbursements (USD millions)</b>
1	12/24/2013	Moderately Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	0.00
2	06/20/2014	Moderately Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	0.00
3	01/14/2015	Moderately Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	0.00
4	04/15/2015	Moderately Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	0.00



## 1. Context, Project Development Objectives, and Design

### *Country context:*

1. Lebanon is a small and densely populated upper middle-income country, with an average gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of US\$9,413 (2011).<sup>1</sup> The population of Lebanon is around 4.5 million, with a large first- and second-generation diaspora. More than 87 percent of the resident population lives in urban areas, with more than half in the capital city of Beirut. The population is relatively young, with youth under the age of 14 representing 25.8 percent of the population.

2. Lebanon is surrounded by countries that are affected by conflict and political violence, which impact the country's political system and economy. The Syrian conflict has persisted since 2012, unleashing a full-blown humanitarian crisis in the region. It has led to a mass exodus of the population, with Lebanon receiving the greatest number of Syrian refugees. Regional security has been further undermined by the emergence of ISIS, operating across Syria and Iraq. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict also prevails to the South of Lebanon, with escalations since 2014 and tension along the border between Israel and Lebanon continues.

3. Despite these adversities, the country is recognized regionally for its strong education system and its multilingual and educated entrepreneurial population. With literacy rates above 90 percent, and gross tertiary enrollment of 54 percent, the country's young graduates represent a competitive talent pool. It is considered a regional leader in the creative media and financial industries, producing high-quality film, music, fashion, architecture, advertising, and design. The country was ranked 89 out of 142 in the 2012 World Economic Forum Competitiveness report that recognizes Lebanon's strong scores on education indicators and its entrepreneurial economy.<sup>2</sup>

4. Nonetheless, Lebanon suffers from high youth unemployment and increasing competition from the region. Lebanon's unemployment rate—particularly youth and female unemployment—is high (34 percent youth unemployment, 18 percent female unemployment, and 11 percent total unemployment based on 2013 World Bank data) and the country faces challenges such as talent migration which is endemic and a priority to development in the World Bank Group's (WB) Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) for Lebanon for FY11-14, as well as insufficient creation of quality jobs for youth as highlighted in the Lebanon Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for FY16-FY21. Lebanon faces tough competition from other economies in the region (such as the lower cost Cairo, or the better equipped Dubai) that have attracted large portions of foreign direct investment, as well as a share of Lebanon's most creative people.

5. Therefore the prospect of creating a mobile Internet ecosystem in Lebanon offers the possibility of transformational effects on the country's labor market that include greater geographic diversification, improved growth, and increased retention of skilled workers. With

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<sup>1</sup> All dollars are in United States dollars unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>2</sup> World Economic Forum, Competitiveness Report, 2012.

mobile technology well distributed across Lebanon, such an ecosystem can create new economic opportunities in regions that have long been economically marginalized. Fostering investment and capital accumulation in new and innovative sectors that use existing domestic human resources and skills can help unleash Lebanon’s potential for growth and over the long-term shift the economy towards a more sustainable growth model.

***Sectoral Context:***

6. In the past, the World Bank has assisted the Ministry of Telecommunications (MoT) of Lebanon which is the leading government institution in the telecommunications sector through non-lending technical assistance as well as grants. These activities consisted in analyzing policy options and providing technical support for the strengthening of infrastructure, particularly for the 3G network.

7. Wireless service in Lebanon is provided by two mobile network operators, Alfa (previously France Telecom Mobile Liban) and Touch Lebanon (previously LibanCell), with 48.1 and 51.9 percent market share respectively. Both operators are state-owned, but managed by private operators on renewable contracts. Mobile services in Lebanon are provided by Alfa and MTC Touch over the government owned networks. Both operators launched 3G/HSPA services in October 2011, followed by 4G LTE networks more recently – however 4G is yet been deployed nationwide. Current wireless penetration is 91.8 percent.<sup>3</sup> Fixed broadband services in Lebanon were provided by the incumbent telecommunications provider, Ogero, which has a 90 percent market share, while the other players share the remaining 10 percent. As of June 2015, there were 391,000 fixed broadband subscribers, corresponding to a 32.9 percent penetration of households, below the average penetration in the region (38.2 percent), and far below the average penetration in GDP per capita (89.2 percent).<sup>4</sup>

8. Lebanon’s innovation in information communication technologies (ICT) has been concentrated in the development of new business opportunities and a growing startup ecosystem. These include Lebanon’s first technology incubator, Berytech<sup>5</sup>, launched in 2001, the Bader Young Entrepreneurs<sup>6</sup> program and Lebanon for Entrepreneurs<sup>7</sup>, AltCity<sup>8</sup> and Coworking961<sup>9</sup>, which have all supported aspiring entrepreneurs and startups. The “Beirut Digital District” initiative led by the Ministry of Telecommunications was launched in 2012 to provide the infrastructure to cluster the ICT industry in four buildings, with a total surface of 15,000 square meters with state-of-the-art facilities and high-speed fiber-optic connections.<sup>10</sup> The Beirut-based ArabNet<sup>11</sup> and Wamda<sup>12</sup>, have successfully built a forum and network across the startup

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<sup>3</sup> [www.telegeography.com](http://www.telegeography.com)

<sup>4</sup> [www.telegeography.com](http://www.telegeography.com)

<sup>5</sup> [www.berytch.org](http://www.berytch.org)

<sup>6</sup> [www.Baderlebanon.com](http://www.Baderlebanon.com)

<sup>7</sup> [www.Lfepartnerships.com](http://www.Lfepartnerships.com)

<sup>8</sup> [www.Altcity.me](http://www.Altcity.me)

<sup>9</sup> [www.coworking961.com](http://www.coworking961.com)

<sup>10</sup> <http://beirutdigitaldistrict.com/>

<sup>11</sup> [www.arabnet.me](http://www.arabnet.me)

ecosystem in the region. 2015 also saw the launch of the UK Tech Hub<sup>13</sup>, the Speed<sup>14</sup> accelerator as well as the operations of Flat6 Labs<sup>15</sup> in the country.

9. To ease the financial barriers to growth of this startup ecosystem and spur its development to support job creation in the country, the Central Bank issued Circular 331 in August 2013. The Circular injected US\$400 million into the economy to boost startup funding and support services. This significantly contributed to the reduction of financial constraints that startups had faced in Lebanon.<sup>16</sup>

10. This, mostly organically developing startup ecosystem, supported by the GoL through the reduction in barriers to access finance, has resulted in the emergence of a rich and dynamic startup community.<sup>17</sup> However, the impact on domestic job creation and brain drain prevention still remains to be assessed.

11. Stakeholders within the mobile Internet and innovation ecosystem highlight that there are still certain constraints that impede the industry from leapfrogging to become a regional leader: (a) insufficient specialized talents and skills available within Lebanon<sup>18</sup> given the brain drain the country faces; (b) lack of collaboration and exposure of the ecosystem to international markets and best practices; and (c) deficiencies within the enabling environment related to regulation and infrastructure. Furthermore, although this startup ecosystem is rich in terms of efforts to support the creation and growth of Lebanese startups, it lacks sufficient coordination, which limits scale-up opportunities.

### ***Rationale for Bank assistance and Development Objectives***

12. Based on the World Bank Group's CPS for Lebanon for FY11-14<sup>19</sup> and the Government's latest Economic and Social Reform Action Plan (Private Sector Development, Infrastructure and Human Development Pillars), the MOT requested a four-year project to promote innovation and entrepreneurship within the mobile internet field.

13. The project's development objective, as described in the project appraisal document and Loan Agreement, was to strengthen innovation and entrepreneurship in the Lebanese mobile Internet ecosystem.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> [www.wamda.com](http://www.wamda.com)

<sup>13</sup> [www.uklebhub.com](http://www.uklebhub.com)

<sup>14</sup> [www.speedlebanon.com](http://www.speedlebanon.com)

<sup>15</sup> [www.flat6lab.com](http://www.flat6lab.com)

<sup>16</sup> Wamda research Lab, Country Insights, September 2015.

<http://www.bdl.gov.lb/circulars/intermediary/5/37/0/Intermediate-Circulars.html>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.executive-magazine.com/getarticle.php?article=15228>

<sup>18</sup> Lebanon ranking in the ITU ICT Skill Index, which captures ICT capacity or skills in the country, has declined from the 57<sup>th</sup> position in 2008 to the 62 position in 2010 out of 152 countries ("Measuring the Information Society," ITU, 2011).

<sup>19</sup> Report 54690-LB

<sup>20</sup> The network of institutions and organizations in the public and private sectors, whose activities and interactions initiate, import, modify, and diffuse new products, services, and technologies in the mobile Internet sector.

14. The project aimed to address identified market failures by: (a) supporting the development of entrepreneurship and engineering skills and talent among young people, (b) providing incentives for young entrepreneurs to remain in Lebanon, (c) reinforcing and advancing the regional competitiveness of Lebanon's core creative and finance industries, (d) strengthening the capacity of Lebanon's universities as centers of innovation and excellence, and (e) linking Lebanon's young talent and businesses to regional and global markets. The project aimed to provide specific training and mentorship to women-owned startups, and leverage the higher education level of Lebanon's female workers.

### ***Project Description, Components and Financing***

15. The project aimed to strengthen innovation and entrepreneurship in the mobile Internet ecosystem through three components targeting the specific needs of this industry, in order to develop international competitiveness:

16. Component 1- Skills Development and Attraction of Talent (US\$1.75 million by IBRD, US\$1.75 million by the GoL) would focus on increasing entrepreneurial skills and practical training of the Lebanese talent pool to enhance its competitiveness in the industry. The subcomponents to be financed under Component 1 were:

1.1 A series of Mobile Internet Competitions (MICs) with a program of structured skills and capacity-building that would have included a training program to address mobile Internet programming and entrepreneurship and problem-solving skills, and a mentorship and international exchange program for entrepreneurs;

1.2 A university-industry platform, where all universities in Lebanon could participate in a mobile Internet industry internship program and in a learning module consisting of co-creation (university students-industry) of mobile Internet projects.

17. Component 2 - Strengthening and Growth of the Mobile Internet Industry (US\$2.90 million by IBRD, US\$2.90 million by GoL) would create the instruments for the industry to interact and develop innovation networks to increase its maturity and global competitiveness. The component would finance the following subcomponents:

2.1 Creation and financing of operations of the MiHub during the course of the project with a mandate focused on serving as a catalyst for innovation of the industry, focal point of the industry, providing a forum for cooperation, building of synergies and transferring of international knowledge and best practices to the Lebanese ecosystem, and on managing the activities of Component 1 and 2;

2.2 Creation of industry clusters with other vertical industries (media, advertising, design, banking, etc.), and establishment of a testing facility (living lab) and project development platform to test mobile Internet prototypes and provide access to the MiHub community to project development within international networks of open innovation;

2.3 And (c) designing a structured promotion campaign, including brand image, to develop a culture of entrepreneurship in this industry and attract talent as well as domestic and international attention to Lebanon's emerging mobile Internet industry.

18. Component 3 - Enhancement of Mobile Internet Enabling Environment (US\$0.5 million by IBRD, US\$0.5 million by GoL) would assess Lebanon's competitive position in ICT-enabled

industries to identify areas where improvements are needed, and to eventually help the Government implement the needed reforms.<sup>21</sup>

19. Component 4 - Project Management (US\$0.75 million by IBRD, US\$0.75 million by the GoL) would finance data collection on indicators to measure project progress and results and strengthens the Financial and Procurement Management Team's (FPMT) capabilities.

### ***Project Financing***

20. The lending instrument selected was a Specific Investment Loan from the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) of US\$6.4 million provided under IBRD terms. The GoL selected a variable spread loan, commitment-linked with a maturity of 12 years, including a five-year grace period. The GoL agreed to co-finance the project by matching the IBRD loan amount (US\$6.4 million equivalent of government funds).

### ***Implementation Arrangements***

21. Due to the technical nature of the project, and the need for a neutral political and commercial structure that convenes all stakeholders from the mobile Internet ecosystem, the project implementation was to be carried out through a two-fold institutional arrangement structure, comprising:

- a) A FPMT at MoT which would be in charge of the M&E aspects of the project;
- b) A technical and independent entity, the MiHub to be created by the FPMT.

22. The MiHub was needed to ensure the ecosystem buy-in and commitment with the activities of the project, and therefore support the sustainability of the project outcome. The MiHub was to take the form of a NGO and would be an independent and autonomous entity with an Advisory Board that included MoT. It would have followed specific auditing and financial controls and salaries of its staff subject to caps, which should be competitive enough with the private sector to attract adequate talent. The incorporation of an independent entity representing the ecosystem for the implementation of the project was informed by the emerging and best practices in similar programs identified by the Task Team in the design of the project.

### ***Risks analysis***

23. The Overall Implementation Risk for the project was considered **Substantial** at appraisal primarily because the project was innovative by nature and the first of its kind within the Bank at the time. Although the design of the project was based on successful proven international examples, it was a completely new approach for the WB. Due to the political environment and the pressures of the conflicts in the region, the overall rating was raised to **High** from December

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<sup>21</sup> The network of institutions and organizations in the public and private sectors, whose activities and interactions initiate, import, modify, and diffuse new products, services, and technologies in the mobile Internet sector in Lebanon. The main members of this ecosystem are represented in MiHub's advisory board.

2013 (first ISR) until January 2015 (3<sup>rd</sup> ISR). It was lowered back to **Substantial** again following a decrease in security risk in Beirut, and remained at the rating until cancelation.

**Table 2. Risk Ratings at Appraisal**

<b>Stakeholder Risk</b>	<b>M</b>
<b>Implementing Agency Risk</b>	
- Capacity	<b>S</b>
- Governance	<b>M</b>
<b>Project Risk</b>	
- Design	<b>S</b>
- Social and Environmental	<b>L</b>
- Program and Donor	<b>L</b>
- Delivery Monitoring and Sustainability	<b>S</b>
- Other: Incubation and Financing Capacity	<b>M</b>
<b>Overall Implementation Risk</b>	<b>S</b>

### *Delay of Approval*

24. **The project suffered from delays since negotiations due to the worsening of the political situation in Lebanon.** Aware of potential deterioration of the local political situation in Lebanon with the elections scheduled in February 2013 and pre-campaign by mid-December 2012, the MoT and the Task Team conducted the project preparation at an accelerated pace. The Concept Note was approved on May 10, 2012 and appraisal was concluded on October 12, 2012. Despite this effort, project preparation suffered delays due to tensions in the political environment at the negotiations stage.

25. **Negotiations started on October 24, 2012, but were not concluded until April 2013 due to an internal disagreement between MoF and MoT.** The Task Team completed appraisal of the project with the counterpart (MoT) in October 12, 2012 after several meetings between the Task Team and the Ministry of Finance (MoF) to discuss the design of the project including the implementation arrangements. Negotiations dates were then agreed for October 24 and 29, 2012. However, there was a disagreement within the Lebanese delegation during negotiations over the sustainability of the MiHub after the project which halted the process. The design of the project as described in the Loan Agreement called for the creation of the MiHub which would take the form of a NGO and would be an independent and autonomous entity but did not address the issues raised by MoF notably the dissolution at the end of the project, as well as fiduciary aspects including audits.

26. The negotiations were ultimately concluded on April 3, 2013 after establishing additional conditions for the MiHub particularly the transfer of its revenues to MoF after its dissolution at the end of the project, subject MiHub to audit controls, and prohibit MiHub from becoming a company, as recorded on the Minutes of the Negotiations.

27. **On March 23, 2013, few days before the agreement that concluded negotiations, the Government resigned and entered in caretaker status.**<sup>22</sup> Despite the government's caretaker status, the Bank took the decision to continue project preparation government and Bank board approval was scheduled for July 31, 2013.

28. **On June 12, 2013, to streamline effectiveness conditions, the Bank proposed the modification of the effectiveness conditions and negotiations were reopened. On June 27, 2013, a streamlined set of conditions were agreed with Delegation of Lebanon.** The revised and agreed effectiveness conditions listed in the Loan Agreement (LA) were the following: (i) establishment of the MiHub; (ii) appointment of MiHub Advisory Board; (iii) appointment of MiHub Executive Director and adequate staffing of MiHub, and; (iv) sealing an Implementation Agreement between the MoT and the MiHub through specifying their respective roles and responsibilities in carrying out the project.

29. **On July 31, 2013, the Board of Executive Directors of the Bank approved the MIEP project.** Although there was already a caretaker government in place, the project package was submitted to the Board, which then took action and approved. The Bank continued to approve other projects as well during this time as per instructions from the Regional Vice President at the time.

## **2. Post-Approval Experience and Reasons for Cancellation**

### *Delay of signing of Loan Agreement (LA)*

30. **The Government caretaker status severely delayed the signing of the Loan Agreement and impacted project preparation.** Following the Board approval, the LA needed to be signed by the Council of Ministers (COM). However, the caretaker government did not hold any Council of Ministers (COM) meetings and thus the signing of LA could not take place. In addition, the caretaker government could not make use of retroactive financing or its own funding to advance project preparation.

31. **The Syrian civil war heavily affected the balance of power within Lebanon,** since its main Sunni (the Future Movement) and Shia (Hezbollah) political factions support opposite sides in the Syrian war. Sectarian tensions further stirred, following Syrian rebels' attack on Shia areas in Lebanon in November 2013. Effectively, rival political camps prevented the caretaker government from reaching quorum on any issue, disagreeing even on Government's appropriate functioning, including convening cabinet meetings. The security situation in the country deteriorated and visiting missions were suspended. The Task Team monitored the situation and continued engagement with the counterpart via teleconference and by meeting the FPMT coordinator in November 2013 at a conference in Spain.

32. **At the start of 2014, significant escalation of attacks in Beirut threatened to undermine Lebanon's stability and increased the urgency for a new government. On**

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<sup>22</sup> This status lasted until February 15, 2014, when an agreement to form a new government was reached.

February 15, 2014, Prime Minister Tammam Salam announced the formation of a new Government of National Interest, a compromise deal between the two blocks that ended the longest episode of political paralysis Lebanon has experienced in decades. **On March 20, 2014, the new cabinet received parliamentary vote of confidence.**

33. **In April 2014, the Task Team promptly reacted to these developments and conducted a mission to engage with the new Government ministries and restart the process of project approval and ratification by the Lebanese Government.** The team met with the new appointed Minister of Telecommunications and the new teams from the Ministries of Finance (MoF), Economy and Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) as well as the Vice Governor of the Central Bank and the National ICT Strategy Coordinator for the Presidency of the COM to reengage in the process of the Government approval and Parliament ratification of the project and to build support among ministries involved in the project's activities. The Minister of Telecommunications expressed strong support for the project and agreed to submit the project for approval to the MoF for further submission to the COM. The Task Team worked with the FPMT on a plan to implement the effectiveness conditions, including the finalization of bylaws and the Articles of Association and reviewed technical and financial documents (e.g., Project Implementation Manual, including Financial Management and Procurement Requirements). To increase the capacity of the FPMT, the World Bank Team also organized the Procurement and Financial Management Capacity Workshop to the FPMT and MoT representatives on April 11-17, 2014.

34. **On May 25, 2014, MoT and MoF agreed to submit the project to the COM for approval on a priority basis.** However, the same day, Michel Suleiman completed his term as President of Lebanon, while the Parliament failed to agree on a next single candidacy. In these circumstances, all legislations were required unanimous COM approval to pass, which, once again, resulted in both sides vetoing any contentious decisions, delaying or completely obstructing effective policymaking.

35. **To support project preparation, the Task Team obtained additional grant funding from the Korean World Bank Partnership Facility (KWBPf).** This grant funding would serve to: (i) advance the preparation of effectiveness conditions, particularly the establishment of the MiHub, (ii) build consensus and a coalition of support among the stakeholders of the technology innovation ecosystem in Lebanon (who, ultimately, would implement the project), and (iii) test and validate the activities for each of the components of the project.

36. **The team strategically used the KWBPf and the South-South Knowledge Exchange (SSKE) fund to support activities** to build momentum and support among stakeholders beyond the government as well as follow up closely on the progress in meeting the effectiveness conditions and the ratification process from Parliament. From October 2014 to August 2015, the team conducted five missions to Lebanon funded through the KWBPf (October, 2014; February, 2015; April 2015; May 2015, and; June 2015).

37. **The project continued to encounter political hurdles.** The new MoF raised objection to the requirement to establish MiHub as an NGO and then terminate it after the project closure. The MoF requested clarification from the MoT, and project's transfer to the COM was further

delayed. **Following the discussion with the World Bank Team, on October 28, 2014, MoT and MoF agreed to present the project for COM's approval.** However, political negotiations among ministries delayed the presentation of the project to COM until December, 2014.

38. **On January 23, 2015, the Bank received a letter from the MoT requesting a three months extension of signing deadline (January 31, 2015).** The letter indicated that the Ministry transferred the project for COM's approval on January 8, 2015, however, due to agenda issues, discussions on the project only started on January 22, 2015. The letter informed that the discussions were still ongoing and would likely extend over the January 31, 2015 deadline. It was expected that the COM would approve the project during February 2015. **Based on the rationale of this request, Bank's Management agreed to extend the deadline of signing the Loan Agreement until April 30, 2015.** The Government was specifically informed that due to the fact that the loan has been approved by the Bank 18 months ago, this would be the final extension of signing deadline.

39. **The Loan Agreement for the project was signed on February 24, 2015.** Article 5.02 of the Agreement stipulates the effectiveness deadline as 180 days after the signing date, which fell on August 23, 2015. To prepare the Parliament ratification process (which is part of the effectiveness conditions), the Team met with legislators and the executive branch. Next steps after the signing of the Agreement and actions required for the completion of the rest of the effectiveness conditions were also discussed.

#### *Delay of effectiveness*

40. **During the May 2015 mission, the Team informed MoT that the Bank would "only agree to extend the effectiveness deadline beyond August 23, 2015 if all the necessary conditions have been met by the Government, and the single remaining condition is project's ratification by the Parliament"** (Management Letter dated May 11, 2015). To meet this goal, the Team agreed with the MoT on a plan of action to help the Ministry to comply with the effectiveness conditions in the remaining months before the deadline. The MoT informed the Team that the COM had signed the transfer Decree on April 28, 2015 and that it was in the process of transferring it to the Parliament.

41. **The political situation continued to deteriorate and parliament was not meeting due to the gridlock of the President's election and the Government was paralyzed.** On August 2015, a grassroots protest movement over the collapse of waste management provision in Beirut turned into a wider campaign against government's performance, public service provision, and corruption. The government put forward a plan to solve the immediate waste problem, but the deeper underlying issues remain unresolved, as Salam's Government has been paralyzed by political deadlock between main factions, which failed to agree on the holding of new parliamentary elections pending for over one year, or the presidency, which has been vacant since May 2015.

42. **On August 13, 2015, ten days before the deadline, the MoF sent the Bank a letter requesting for a six-month deadline extension for the effectiveness of the MIEP project.** The letter referred to the Aide Memoire from the April-May 2015 mission stipulating that the Bank

would consider extending the effectiveness deadline only if all necessary conditions are in place except ratification by the Parliament. The letter requesting the extension of effectiveness deadline stated that the Government had fulfilled all effectiveness conditions under its control and the only remaining step was Parliament ratification. The letter also listed the effectiveness conditions and compliance date as illustrated in the table below.

<b>Effectiveness Condition</b>	<b>Date Fulfilled</b>
MiHub Legally Established	August 14, 2015
Appointment of the MiHub Advisory Board	July 24, 2015
MiHub staffed in adequate numbers and headed by an Executive Director	July 24, 2015
Implementation Agreement executed between MoT and MiHub	August 14, 2015
Ratification of LA package by the Parliament	Not met

43. **On a letter dated August 24, 2015, the Bank communicated to the GoL that effectiveness deadline of August 23, 2015 was not extended.** Parliament did not have any session before the deadline of August 23, 2015; hence, no Parliament ratification occurred, effectively terminating the project. In this letter, the Country Director (CD) reiterated Bank’s commitment to the policy dialogue and cooperation in the sector through other available means and approaches that might become available.

44. **Despite the non-extension of the project, the MiHub and the MoT requested the continuation of the engagement of the Bank to support the technology startup ecosystem in Lebanon.** The stakeholders represented in the MiHub (i.e., universities, private sector, civil society and government) requested the Bank to explore the possibility of assisting the ecosystem through other means other than a Bank Loan. The MiHub deems the role of the Bank as necessary to provide a neutral environment where all the stakeholders could be represented and address the remaining gaps constraining the ecosystem growth and sustainability.

### **3. Assessment of Bank Performance**

Rating: Moderately Satisfactory

45. **During preparation:** Bank performance during project preparation is rated Moderately Satisfactory. The Team worked with the counterparts and other government stakeholders to evaluate the timing of project preparation and the potential risks from political tensions due to scheduled elections. The team was able to anticipate the risk on potential political instability and accelerated the preparation phase accordingly. However, the rapid deterioration of the political situation, particularly due to the Syrian conflict was difficult to predict. The team also included in the operation a retroactive financing option for project preparation but external unexpected and prolonged gridlock in the government and Parliament impeded its use.

46. **During supervision:** Bank performance between the Board approval and cancellation of the project is rated Moderately Satisfactory due mainly to the very difficult and challenging environment,

47. Despite the delay in signing the Loan Agreement, meeting the project effectiveness conditions, and the eventual cancellation of the loan, the Bank Team proactively worked with the counterparts in a consultative and open-minded manner for solutions to ensure that the project development objectives are met. The Team managed to galvanize financial support from other resources/grants to help the government raise awareness about the project and its benefits among a wider set of stakeholders, as well as work with the MoT and the MoF on removing the implementation capacity constraints of the FPMT during this period. The availability of resources from the KWBPTF grant was particularly instrumental in allowing the Bank to bring international experience in support of the project preparation and meeting its effectiveness conditions. Nine missions were undertaken after board approval (five of them to facilitate and supervise the KWBTF activities) and were supplemented by reverse missions in Barcelona during the time that security situation impeded missions to the country. In addition, the team facilitated capacity building and trainings for the FPMT. The project signing date was extended one time to allow the project to move to meeting the effectiveness conditions. Despite the project cancellation, the preparatory work developed by the team resulted in a coalition of private and public sector partners (through the MiHub) who are requesting the continuation of Bank support to the strengthening of Lebanon technology ecosystem. The performance of the Team with the KWBPTF resulted in continuous support to the ecosystem through the MiHub.

#### 4. Assessment of Borrower Performance

Rating: Moderately Satisfactory

48. **Government performance:** The Government's willingness to co-finance the project, instead of parallel financing, illustrated its commitment to the project and its implementation. This commitment is also apparent in that the Government financed the project preparation, including the FPMT, from its own resources. Still, the new cabinet establishment in 2014 and the political disputes and gridlock of Parliament, created a negative operating environment for the project, which suffered from continuous delays. Once the new government was formed, and despite lingering political disputes, there was an effort for meeting effectiveness conditions. However, the gridlock of Parliament, which is beyond Government actions, impeded meeting all effectiveness conditions.

49. **Implementing agency's performance:** The MoT was responsible for the majority of activities necessary to meet the effectiveness conditions. However, its low capacity, especially in qualified personnel and financial and procurement management, in addition to the changes in Ministry's leadership, substantially hindered preparation of the project and meeting the effectiveness conditions. The caretaking status of the Government impeded MoT from implementing the actions needed to move the forward. However, once the new government was appointed, MoT was instrumental in taken steps towards project preparation, undertaking all the actions that were under its control to meet effectiveness conditions. The MoT consistently

supported the project within the Government and was instrumental in achieving the signing of the Agreement and resolving the issue with the MoF leadership after the new Government had been established. Throughout the project preparation, the MoT consistently advocated for the approval of the Loan Agreement by COM as well as its signature and transfer to Parliament for ratification. Moreover, MoT requested continuing working with the Bank through other means to support the goals of the project.

## 5. Lessons Learned

50. **Preparation funds.** Although the project included tools for making funds available for the counterpart to prepare the project, these could not be exploited. Retroactive financing is not available for a government in care taker status and MoT could not use co-financing funds without preliminary approval of the project budget line by Parliament for. For future projects, tools to access preparation funds need to be assessed more carefully in lieu of potential Government caretaker status of Parliament gridlock.

51. **Strategic use of Trust Funds (TF) to support preparation.** In lieu of preparation funds, the team strategically used trust funds to build a coalition of partners to support the project activities and meet the effectiveness conditions as well as continuous engagement and support to the government. Without the availability of TF funding and activities, the team would have not had enough resources to engage with the counterparts and the government actors in an effective and continued way to unlock the political hurdles the project preparation faced at the government level.

52. **Coalition of partners to ensure sustainability.** The project was designed to incorporate the technology ecosystem stakeholders in the implementation of the project. By establishing a PPP approach for the project implementation, the project was able to build momentum and a coalition of partners that ensured sustainability of the activities beyond the Government. The fact that the private and public stakeholders are requesting the Bank to continue its involvement in the sector through technical assistance proves that the project has strong demand and was supported by an extended coalition of partners.

53. **Project Readiness.** The project requirement of the MiHub establishment, which included the ecosystems stakeholders, required extensive work from the Bank team and the counterpart. This would have been difficult to achieve without the additional TF funding. For future projects incorporating such PPP approaches, the Bank should consider either incorporating the creation of these approaches as part of the project, where adequate funding is available, or to have them implemented before requesting Board approval.

54. **Technical assistance:** Operations that support entrepreneurship and innovation require strong technical assistance by the World Bank and external experts. The World Bank Task Team for MIEP provided heavy supervision and technical assistance under MIEP not only to support the GoL in reaching project effectiveness but also to ensure project relevance and local capacity building for a rapidly changing industry. This built on continuous stakeholder engagement as well as advice and participation from leading industry experts and practitioners. It also relied on the Task Team's initiative to raise additional financial resources, such as Trust Funds, to support

Bank-executed technical assistance activities amidst political standstill in Lebanon. As a result, the project received strong support and recognition from key stakeholders despite significant delays in its implementation.

55. **Project design:** The design of the MIEP project provides lessons for future operations that support innovation and entrepreneurship. The project design reflected the critical need of formally engaging key stakeholders in project activities in order to effectively support the startup ecosystem, leveraging a neutral coordinating mechanism through the MiHub. To ensure the relevance of project design, the Task Team organized a co-creation workshop for the MiHub, where key stakeholders helped design and validate proposed MiHub activities. These steps were widely supported by key stakeholders in Lebanon and recognized as effective mechanisms to ensure their buy-in and coordination.

56. **Choice of Bank product:** An SIL (Specific Lending Instrument), particularly in a politically complex environment such as Lebanon, may not be the most appropriate Bank product to support innovation and entrepreneurship. These areas are amenable to rapid change due to technology, organic innovation, shifting market conditions or financing by other donors. The effectiveness of interventions in these areas rely on the active engagement and dynamic collaboration with a broad set of stakeholders to ensure relevance and buy-in. As such, lending operations may prove too rigid in their structure to enable rapid iteration and amendments to the design of these operations. Government counterparts may also face limited capacity to ensure quality delivery, or be subject to frequent disruptions due to political instability, such as in the case of Lebanon. Other products, such as Trust Funds or Reimbursable Services, where appropriate, may provide more flexibility to support timely and quality delivery. Therefore, it is recommended that the type of product is carefully examined and justified for such operations to limit the risk of disruptions and challenges in delivery.

57. **Risk evaluation:** Bank's experience in Lebanon shows that loans prepared with caretaker governments, are prone to disruptions following changes in government teams upon reshuffling or elections. This political risk is further exacerbated by rivalries between factions. As a result, operations may need to be synchronized with internal and, in case of Lebanon, also with regional political cycles to minimize disruptions and prolonged delay in government commitments. Furthermore, other Bank products that are more aligned with the political realities in Lebanon and countries with similar governance challenges may need to be selected.

58. **Extensions and notification of cancellation decision (NOC):** The Borrower should be repeatedly warned from the outset of negotiations and during the project supervision that the extension of signing and effectiveness deadlines is an exceptional procedure granted in rare and properly supported circumstances. In terms of the NOC, the Bank could have provided a clear message to the Government on the importance of reaching project effectiveness, including Parliament approval, on time, particularly given the reputational issues that the Government would face if the project is cancelled due to government inefficiency.

## Annex 1. Bank Lending and Implementation Support/Supervision Processes

### (a) Task Team members

<b>Lending</b>				
Name	Role	Title	Specialization	Unit
Victor Mulas	Team Leader (ADM Responsible)	ICT Policy Specialist	--	GTIDR
Lina Fares	Team Member	Senior Procurement Specialist	--	GGODR
Rock Jabbour	Team Member	Financial Management Analyst	--	GGODR
Carlo Maria Rossotto	Team Member	Lead ICT Policy Specialist	--	GTIDR
Cecilia Maria Paradi-Guilford	Team Member	ICT Policy Specialist	--	GTIDR
Haneen Ismail Sayed	Team Member	Program Leader	--	MNC02
Janna El-Horr	Team Member	Social Development Specialist	--	GSURR
David Satola	Team Member	Lead Counsel	--	LEGPS
Ilari Lindy	Team Member	Senior Operations Officer	--	TWICT
Ivan Ganzalez-Berenguer Pena	Team Member	ICT Operations Analyst	--	TWICT
Jannina Flores Ramirez	Team Member	Program Assistant	--	TWICT
Joulan Abdul Khalek	Team Member	Consultant	--	TWICT
Mei Wang	Team Member	Senior Counsel	--	LEGAM
Nada Abou-Rizk	Team Member	Program Assistant	--	MNCLB
Mather Pfeiffenberger	Team Member	Operations Analyst	--	TWICT
Mouna Couzi	Team Member	Operations Analyst	--	MNCLB
Maya Boulos Bouloas	Team Member	Financial Management Specialist	--	MNAFM
Hassine Hedda	Team Member	Finance Officer	--	CTRLA
<b>Supervision/NCO</b>				
Victor Mulas	Team Leader (ADM Responsible)	ICT Policy Specialist	--	GTIDR
Carlo Maria Rossotto	Team Member	Lead ICT Policy Specialist	--	GTIDR
Cecilia Maria Paradi-Guilford	Team Member	ICT Policy Specialist	--	GTIDR
Ndeye Anna Ba	Team Member	Program Assistant	--	GTIDR
Ilari Lindy	Team Member	Senior Operations Officer	--	GTIDR

Yegana Faramaz Baghirova	Team Member	Consultant	--	GTIDR
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**(b) Staff Time and Cost**

Stage of Project Cycle	Staff Time and Cost (Bank Budget Only)	
	No. of staff weeks	USD Thousands (including travel and consultant costs)
<b>Lending</b>	45.11	200,735.00
<b>Supervision/NCO</b>	119.10	527,499.27
<b>Total:</b>	164.21	728,234.27

## **Annex 2. List of Supporting Documents**

- MIEP PAD.
- MIEP Loan Agreement.
- MIEP ISRs.
- MIEP Aide Memoires.
- Agreed Minutes of Negotiations between the Lebanese Republic and the IBRD regarding the loan for MIEP.
- Letter from H.E. Mohamad Safadi, Minister of Finance, to Mr. Ferid Belhaj, Country Director, on June 27, 2013. Subject: MIEP Modifications of Effectiveness Conditions.
- Letter from Mr. Ferid Belhaj, Country Director to H. E. Nicolas Sehnaoui, Former Minister of Telecommunications on June 12, 2013. Subject: MIEP - Modification of effectiveness conditions.
- Letter from Mr. Ferid Belhaj, Country Director, to H.E. Ali Hassan Khalil, Minister of Finance on January 27, 2015. Subject: Lebanon MIEP - Extension of Signing Deadline.
- Letter from H.E. Boutros Hard, Minister of Telecommunications to Mr. Husam Beides, Acting Country Director, on June 29, 2015. Subject: MIEP Financial and Procurement Management Team Appointment.
- Letter from H.E. Ali Hassan Khalil, Minister of Finance to Mr. Ferid Belhaj, Country Director, on August 13, 2015. Subject: Request for a six-month deadline extension for the effectiveness of the MIEP 8265-LB.
- Letter from Mr. Ferid Belhaj, Country Director, to H.E. Ali Hassan Khalil, Minister of Finance, and H.E. Boutros Harb, Minister of Telecommunications, on August 24, 2015. Subject: Request for Extension for effectiveness of MIEP.
- KWPF proposal for Lebanon.
- South-South Knowledge Exchange program proposal for Lebanon and Chile.

### **Annex 3. Information on the KWPF and SSKE funds for Lebanon**

#### **Status update on the Mobile Innovation Knowledge Network funded by the KWPF**

KWPF delivered the following activities up to date:

1. Co-creation workshop to design and create the Mobile Innovation Network (MIN)
2. The Open Innovation Week
3. Startup Challenge
4. Tech For Kids

These activities were linked to key deliverables of the components of MIEP project and served to provide their foundations and to prepare their implementation. The details of these activities is as follows:

#### **1. Co-creation workshop to design and create the Mobile Innovation Network (MIN)**

Cocreation workshop: The workshop took place on the week of October 20, 2014 in Beirut. Speakers represented lead examples – including from include models Korea (NIPA), Finland (Forum Virium), France (Silicon Sentier), and the Netherlands (Waag Society) to guide the local stakeholders. The workshop started with an open event on Strengthening Lebanon’s Mobile Internet Ecosystem on October 20, 2014. The first day of the event was a larger, open session to provide a platform for dialogue and knowledge sharing with leading global experts in the field of mobile internet ecosystem; and to showcase mobile innovation experiences successfully adopted in France, the Netherlands, Korea and Finland, which can serve as a model for mobile Internet development in Lebanon. The event was opened by Dr. Walid Karam, Advisor to the Minister of Telecommunications, and Dr. Husam Beides, World Bank Acting Head of the Lebanon Country Office, followed by presentations by the World Bank team, and various innovation and startup hubs such as NUMA (France), the Waag Society (Netherlands), Forum Virium (Finland) and the National IT Promotion Agency (Republic of Korea). The open session also introduced the World Bank’s approach to fostering innovation ecosystems and developing a community of practice and network in this area for knowledge sharing. Between October 21 and 23, 2014, the event proceeded with a closed co-creation workshop with a more focused approach to design the activities of the MiHub, a non-governmental organization, which will be created by the MIEP to manage its Components 1 and 2 under MIEP. The participants of the workshop included approximately 20 representatives of key stakeholders in Lebanon’s mobile Internet ecosystem, including the government, donors, academia, students, private sector and local innovation and startup networks, co-working spaces and accelerators. The workshop consisted of hands-on team working sessions facilitated by two expert moderators and leveraged the presence of the international experts from the first day of the event. The co-creation workshop resulted in the below key conclusions regarding the mobile Internet ecosystem of Lebanon in general and the MIEP specifically:

- i. The workshop participants confirmed that there is a pressing need for the project, and for the creation of the MiHub.
- ii. The event validated the specific activities of the MiHub outlined in the project. These included outreach and marketing of entrepreneurship to youth; innovation

- competitions paired with a focused and applied multidisciplinary skills development and training program; a platform to match students with industry and the coordination of multisectoral stakeholders of the ecosystem.
- iii. The event also produced specific business lines and models for these activities that will serve to inform the MiHub implementation of activities once the project is effective.
  - iv. The event served to establish a group of core constituency from the mobile internet ecosystem in Lebanon that will form the basis of the MiHub and the first composition of its advisory board.

## **2. The Open Innovation Week**

The World Bank collaborated with local Lebanese technology communities to host Open Innovation Week in Beirut at the end of February 2015, bringing speakers from prominent US-based institutions, such as Google, Stanford University, and the Massachusetts International Technology (MIT) for “tinkering with a purpose”. That purpose was to harness the power of open source tools to fix problems and build up their technology and entrepreneurship skills. A series of TED-style talks and hands-on workshops introduced members of the Lebanese government, academics, and others to a range of tools and technologies aimed at helping young people address challenges critical to Lebanon. Talks given by creative thinkers ranged from topics like industrial design and 3D printing, to open source gaming and online payment methods. Open Innovation Week gave young people extra exposure to technologies like “do-it-yourself” computer boards, sensors, open source coding and web tools, business thinking (such as the lean start-up methodology), and techniques like design thinking to channel creativity into solutions relevant to Lebanese youth. The local stakeholders also expressed commitment to organically grow OIW and organize it on an annual basis.

## **3. Startup Challenge**

Following the OIW, a Startup Challenge took place whereby 10 Lebanese startup projects pitched in front of a [prestigious jury and two were selected to enter into an acceleration program run by Bader Young Entrepreneurs. The two winning team was then awarded a study tour to London and engaged with key ecosystem actors in London, expanding the knowledge sharing network. After this program both winning teams obtained additional competitive funding from accelerators and venture capital funds and are currently continuing their projects.

#### **4. Tech For Kids**

This event facilitated knowledge sharing in the area of building 21st Century skills for youth, and informed the implementation plan for the MiHub activities. This was a series of events held in Beirut to expose children, teachers, and members of the Lebanese government to the use of innovative ICT tools in problem solving and collaboration in the classroom, as well as to new ways of fostering creativity—an issue critical to the future economy of a country where high literacy rates and high enrollment in tertiary education produce a pool of well-educated youth, about one third of whom (34%) are unable to find employment at home. Launched in late April 2015, Tech For Kids aims to use technology in the classroom to improve children’s core education or STEAM—science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics—by equipping students with the tools they need to pursue careers in jobs that need them to be more innovative. Understanding technology, and applying some of the methodologies related to it, is a key skillset in today’s labor force. The Tech for Kids program began with holding a small fair for middle school children (age roughly 11–14), as well as for their parents and teachers. This was followed by a workshop at Beirut Digital District, where teachers and students from several schools—public and private— worked with local and international education experts on exploring new technology. The technology included LEGO Education, littleBits,Scratch, 3D printing, Raspberry Pi and a new, Lebanese-manufactured building tool, QalamSila. The sessions were led by Stuart Swann, a LEGO certified trainer from the UK; Sabine El Kahi, the founder of Kids Genius; Eliane Metni, Director of International Education Association; and Jose Antonio Galaso, an education specialist from Barcelona who previously worked at CitiLab, which pioneered the integration of these tools, as well as other educational approaches. Through hands-on exercises in building and deconstructing structures, facilitators familiarized participants with creativity, teamwork, and “learning by doing”. To complement the hands-on training sessions, the World Bank team brought government, education, and innovation stakeholders together to talk about 21st Century Skill Development in Lebanon. This highlighted homegrown and international examples of using technology to improve learning, providing an opportunity to develop collaboration between all the different stakeholders in Lebanon.

#### **Status update on the South-South Knowledge Exchange activity for Lebanon**

The activity was completed in July 2015. The proposed Knowledge Exchange with Chilean stakeholders in the innovation ecosystem helped to expose Lebanese innovation ecosystem stakeholders to other ecosystem development models from a country with similar economic characteristics but more advanced innovation capacities, to be able to share best practices of two innovation poles in different stages but both in an advantage position inside emerging markets. It was also aimed to support the development of international knowledge exchange on open innovation and strengthen knowledge ties, capacity and dialogue among policy makers on different approaches to support the development of a conducive environment for innovative and competitive startups and strategies for human capital retention.

The Chilean delegation was formed by a comprehensive team that covered different aspects of the entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystem and included the executive director of Startup Chile, the head of the social innovation center at Finis Terrae University, the co-founder of

Santiago Maker Space and the operations director of Ideas Factory, Santaigo's organic innovation hub.

The targeted participants in this exchange were key public and private stakeholders whose activities and interactions are related to management and development of product and services in the entrepreneurship ecosystem:

- Representatives of the **Government of Lebanon** including officials from the Ministry of Telecommunications (Counterpart of MIEP Project), Banque du Liban, Investment Development Authority of Lebanon (IDAL);
- Representatives of **incubators and accelerators**, including Alt City, BeryTech, Cloud 5, Endeavor Lebanon, Lebanon for Entrepreneurs, Speed;
- Representatives of the **financial community for entrepreneurs** such as Kafalat, Berytech Fund, Middle East Venture Partners (MEVP), MENA Private Equity Association;
- Representatives of the **innovation and entrepreneurship community**, including Arabnet, Bader Lebanon, Startup Megaphone, Wamda;
- Entrepreneurs and initiatives in different fields that included HBR, Modeo, Onomatopoeia, Station Beirut, SETT Partnership, Zoomal;
- Representatives of Universities that participated in the workshop, among them American University of Beirut, Lebanese American University, Lebanese, Ecole Superieure des Affaires, Notre Dame University, American University of Science and Technology;
- **Donors and developing partners**, including Beirut Digital District, UK Lebanon Tech Hub.