

# AICS BEIRUT OFFICE



2023



LEBANON AND SYRIA



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# Preface



Our commitment at AICS Beirut has always been based on the understanding that sustainable development relies on close and effective COLLABORATION, cooperation, and communication among diverse groups of actors.

This annual report outlines our engagement in Syria and Lebanon for 2023, covering a wide range of sectors—from cultural heritage to major infrastructure, from education to sustainable and environmentally friendly agriculture. Throughout, our focus has been on working together at all levels, with the right timing, even if it is not always ideal.

This is our definition of PARTNERSHIP, executed daily in the field through the

*«The concept of “global partnership” emphasizes that every country is responsible for its own economic and social development, and that the global community has a responsibility to create an international environment conducive to this development»*

(ECOSOC Development Cooperation Forum, October 2015).

way AICS Beirut implements its initiatives. This involves all local institutional partners, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector, from project conception and formulation to joint implementation of activities.

**Alessandra Piermattei**  
**Titolare Sede AICS Beirut**



## The Italian Agency for Development Cooperation – AICS

**T**he Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) is the development aid agency of the Italian government, established by Law 125/2014 and operational since January 2016. **The Agency has its headquarters in Rome, with an office in Florence and 19 offices** abroad to monitor, implement, and analyze the development needs of partner countries on the ground.

The Agency's mission is to carry out activities of a technical-operational nature related to the appraisal, formulation, financing, management, and control phases of international cooperation initiatives. For Italy, cooperation is not only “an integral and qualifying part of Italian foreign policy” (**Art. 1 of Law No. 125 of August 11, 2014**), but also represents a new and more modern form of foreign policy. **Its main goals are to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality, promote human rights and**

**gender equality, support liberal democracy, and develop the rule of law.**

The future focus is on more equitable wealth distribution, ensuring access to the right to health and education, and promoting environmental sustainability.

This is the challenge that Italian Cooperation aims to propose and experiment with, demonstrating a new form of “economy of human promotion” on which public and private agents can collaborate, integrating culture, education, labor, rights, business, and community according to the European and Italian model.

The AICS works closely with the Directorate General for Development Cooperation (DGCS) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI) and with the Cassa Depositi e Prestiti (CDP), which has been designated as the “Italian Development

Bank.” The so-called “**Sistema Italia**” encompasses the various actors involved in Italian cooperation, both public and private, including state administrations, embassies, chambers of commerce, universities, decentralized cooperation entities, the nonprofit community (NGOs, foundations, diaspora associations, ethical finance, fair trade organizations), and businesses.

Sistema Italia strengthens the coherence

and effectiveness of cooperative action by creating synergies among these diverse and complementary actors to address the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030.

The current Director of AICS is Minister Plenipotentiary **Marco Riccardo Rusconi**, who assumed office on December 12, 2023.



## 1. Office Context



At its Beirut Office, the Italian Development Cooperation Agency serves as the center for programming, monitoring, and coordination activities for Lebanon and Syria, two countries of great strategic importance and among the largest recipients of Italian governmental development support in the Middle East.

- Lebanon's recent history is marked by the 15-year civil war that ended in 1990 and the 2006 war with Israel. Since October 2023, unfortunately, a new conflict has been frightening the country, weighing on the slight hopes for economic recovery and the daily lives of Lebanese. Since its independence in 1943, Lebanese politics, society, and economy have been strongly marked by the conflicts and tensions that make the entire Middle East region unique. Lebanon is currently experiencing a deep economic crisis, which began in 2019, aggravated by the chronic shortage of essential public services such as schools and healthcare. The economic crisis was further amplified by the dramatic explosion at the port







of Beirut in August 2020. On social and economic levels, the country is increasingly feeling the weight of the presence, now a decade old, of about one and a half million displaced Syrians, against a population estimated at five and a half million, over a territory of 10,412 square kilometers.

- Syria is facing an expanded humanitarian crisis caused by more than twelve years of hostilities and the combined action of multiple endogenous and exogenous factors. UNOCHA estimates that in 2024, more than 70 percent of the population—or around 16.7 million people—will require humanitarian assistance, the highest number since the beginning of hostilities in 2011. The progressive deterioration of the macroeconomic environment is leading to an increase in poverty and the dependence of millions of people on humanitarian assistance. Over the past four years, poor rainfall and

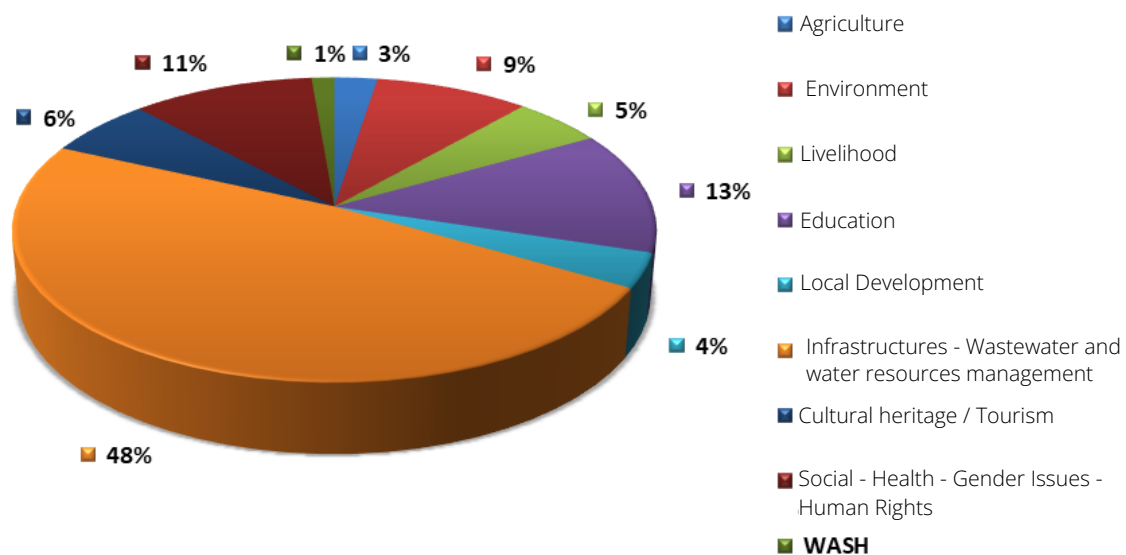
low water levels in the Euphrates River have had a serious impact on agricultural production and increased public health risks. Electricity and fuel shortages prevent the optimal functioning of water systems, health facilities, schools, markets, bakeries, and other essential infrastructure. These shortages reduce the productive capacity of local businesses and industries and discourage new investments in productive sectors. The shortage of public resources has led to the collapse of national public service systems. The situation is further aggravated by the earthquake that hit the northern regions on February 6 and 20, 2023, which—in addition to causing around 5,900 deaths and 12,800 injuries—further damaged civil infrastructure and affected the living conditions of the population.



## 2. Table of data by area of intervention

Sectors of Intervention in Lebanon	Total
Agriculture	6.591.620,61
Environment	23.723.775,68
Livelihood	13.900.000,00
Education	34.500.000,00
Local Development	9.683.816,00
Infrastructures - Wastewater and water resources management	127.650.526,78
Cultural heritage / Tourism	16.328.000,00
Social - Health - Gender Issues - Human Rights	28.122.786,97
WASH	3.500.000,00
<b>Total</b>	<b>264.000.526,04</b>

Sectors of Intervention in 2023





**Area:**  
10452km2

**Population:**  
5.000.000 (Estimation)

**Type of government:**  
Parliamentary Republic

**Capital:**  
Beirut

### 3. Lebanon During 2023

2023 was a year with prospects for Lebanon, with slight but real signs of a possible recovery. However, it ended with the country sinking back to the brink of war with Israel. For the first nine months of the year, the economic crisis, which began in October 2019, seemed to have slowed down, and the first signs of stabilization were beginning to be evident.

Two main factors helped in the recovery of the country: the revival of tourism, which had already increased by 50 percent in 2022, and the increase in remittances from Lebanese living abroad. This latter data cannot be precisely quantified, as the 17 million Lebanese abroad also send small or large sums to their families through informal channels, such as by bringing cash into the country directly. The clear increase in consumption, particularly food consumption, the stabilization of the Lebanese lira at around LBP 89,000 per USD on the parallel foreign exchange market, and the settling of the private sector, especially in commercial activities, were evidence of the slowing down of the crisis.

Despite these signs of improvement, the most recognized

estimates speak of an inflation rate that is expected to have reached 231.3% in 2023, due to the persistent deterioration of the economic situation at the macro level. Moreover, Lebanon topped the list of countries most affected by significant food price inflation in the first quarter of 2023, at 350% on an annual basis, aggravating the instability of living conditions for the poorest and most vulnerable segments of the population. In addition, the rapid depreciation of the exchange rate characterized the first months of the year, along with the consequent and increasingly extensive dollarization of all economic transactions, including retail transactions. Due to the constant increase in prices in the consumer shopping trolley, purchasing power has declined for both public and private sector wages. It's worth noting that salaries in the private sector are in valued currency while those in the public sector are in LBP, although in both cases lower than in 2019.

The last months of 2023, mainly due to the conflict in the south of the country, had a strong impact on the entire Lebanese economy. Consequently, there isn't certain data regarding the GDP of the year,

with the most complete data being those recently released by the Institute of International Finance (IFF). The organization, which brings together





some 400 banks and financial companies around the world, estimated in its latest report that Lebanon's GDP would decline by 7 percent in 2023, a larger drop than the 6.5 percent in 2022. By the end of the year, GDP is expected to have reached USD 14.8 billion, down from USD 51.7 billion in 2019, according to the IFF. In the absence of official data and considering a Lebanese population of around 5.5 million, United Nations data estimate that around 2.1 million Lebanese, 1.5 million displaced Syrians, 211,400 Palestinian refugees, and 81,000 migrants are vulnerable and in need of support.

Furthermore, it is important to mention the political and institutional emptiness. The mandate of the President of the Republic ended in October 2022, and since then, the Lebanese political forces have been unable to reach an agreement leading to the appointment of his successor. As per the Lebanese constitution, this means not only a vacancy at the level of state commitment but also that the government can only oversee

the management of conventional administration. The economic and political framework continues to have highly negative repercussions on the public system, especially with regards to services to citizens, which were already structurally weak and deficient before the crisis erupted in 2019.

Lastly, the presence of around one and a half million displaced persons from Syria remains a political and social problem for Lebanon. This presence, which has lasted for a decade, has increased competition for access to the labor market, caused the deterioration of infrastructure, and limited access to public services for citizens. In the absence of support from the international donor community, these issues would lead to total collapse.

Due to this context and the crisis, the Lebanese government imposed control measures on capital movements and restrictions on access to currency deposits in the absence of a reform of the financial system.

## 4. International Cooperation in Lebanon

Within the framework of multiple overlapping crises of various natures, the response of the international community has progressed in recent years towards complex and articulated planning, with different demands and strategies of humanitarian response, stabilization, and development that should complement each other to ensure durable long-term solutions for humanitarian, development, and peace efforts.

In Lebanon, two distinct structures coincide at the humanitarian level: the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), established in 2011 to respond to the consequences of the Syrian crisis in Lebanon, and the Emergency Response Plan (ERP), launched by OCHA in 2021 following the worsening economic crisis in the country, which focuses more broadly on the needs of people in vulnerable conditions. As of 2021, the LCRP (Lebanon's chapter of the 3RP) has received approximately USD 9.5 billion (with a request for USD 3.59 billion for 2023), while the ERP has identified approximately USD 200 million in funds to meet the needs for 2023. In 2024, these two humanitarian frameworks, ERP and LCRP, will be merged into a single framework called the Lebanon Response



Plan (LRP), inspired by both humanitarian and stabilization logic, with a time horizon until 2025. The purpose is to align its duration with the UNSDCF 2023-2025, the international community's framework inspired by a dual logic of recovery and development to achieve the SDGs, implicitly favoring a gradual transition towards a more development-oriented approach.

Regarding the development side, the "Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework" (3RF) is a unique and inclusive platform to address Lebanon's national reform challenges and foster investment in reconstruction. The 3RF is a collaborative and strategic partnership between the

Lebanese government, civil society, and the international community.

Launched in December 2020, the 3RF was originally conceived as a plan to respond to the urgent needs of the population affected by the Beirut port explosion on August 4 and to implement the reforms needed to support reconstruction and help restore people's confidence in the country's institutions through improved governance. In August 2021, 17 intervention sectors were identified and distributed into 14

sectoral working groups following the proposal of the World Bank, the European Union, and the United Nations to facilitate appropriate, coherent, and efficient implementation of the commitments made. The response phase of the recovery of people ended in June 2022. The 3RF, in its current state, is still a viable instrument focused on inclusive policy dialogue and the implementation of reforms and long-term reconstruction of resources, services, and infrastructure, aiming at sustainable economic recovery for all of Lebanon.



## 5. Italian Cooperation In Lebanon

### Signature of First Cooperation Agreement

- ▶ Financing the reconstruction in Lebanon
- ▶ Support of vulnerable social groups
- ▶ Close collaboration with Lebanese institutions and civil society
- ▶ First project: Construction of the public water pumping station in Dbayé, on the periphery of Beirut

1983

### Opening of the Italian Cooperation Office

- ▶ Financing initiatives to strengthen the partnership between Lebanon, Italy, and Europe with the participation of international organizations, companies, associations, local authorities, and universities
- ▶ Financing initiatives for institutional strengthening of development policies in different sectors such as social protection, environment, water and waste management, rural development, and cultural heritage protection and enhancement

2006

### Crises in Syria

Italy is committed to supporting Lebanon through interventions of humanitarian aid and development in support of populations

2011

### Explosion at Beirut Port

Italy is committed in Lebanon after the Beirut port explosion to rebuild damaged sites and provide economic support to affected families

2020

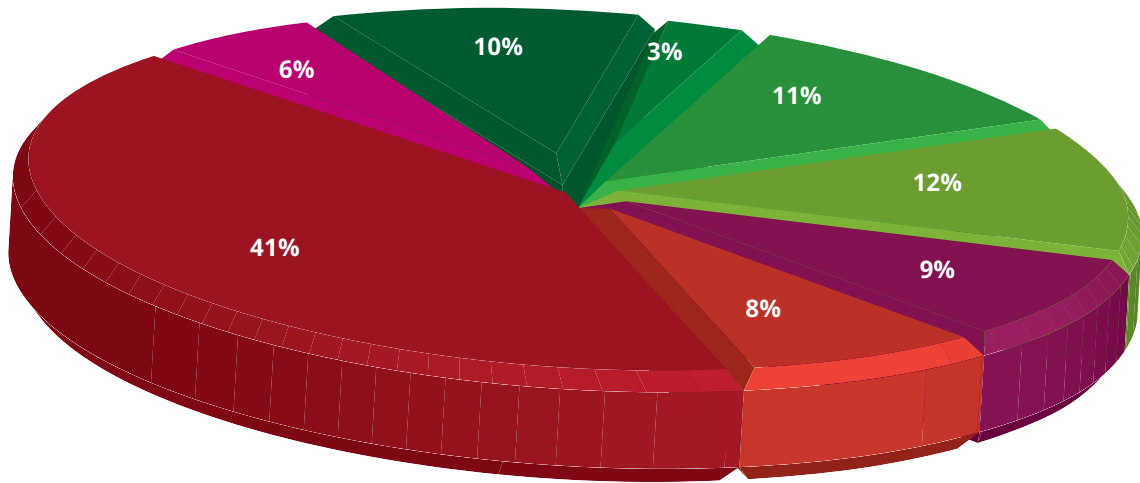
**Total Financing from Italy:**

260 million euros (ongoing initiatives as of 2023)





### Sectors of Intervention in Lebanon



 Infrastructures  
Water Management

 Social Development

 Environment

 Cultural Heritage  
and Tourism

 Humanitarian Aid

 Agriculture

 Social Affairs - Health -  
Gender - Human Rights

 Education

## 6. Initiatives in Lebanon in 2023

The “Three-Year Planning Programme 2021-2023” lists Lebanon as one of the priority countries, planning to assist populations affected by humanitarian or prolonged crises with the aim of protecting life, preventing suffering, and safeguarding people’s dignity. The programme requires that initiatives should be agreed upon with the beneficiary government, aligned with international humanitarian appeals, and also implemented with the assistance of civil society organizations and other non-profit entities.

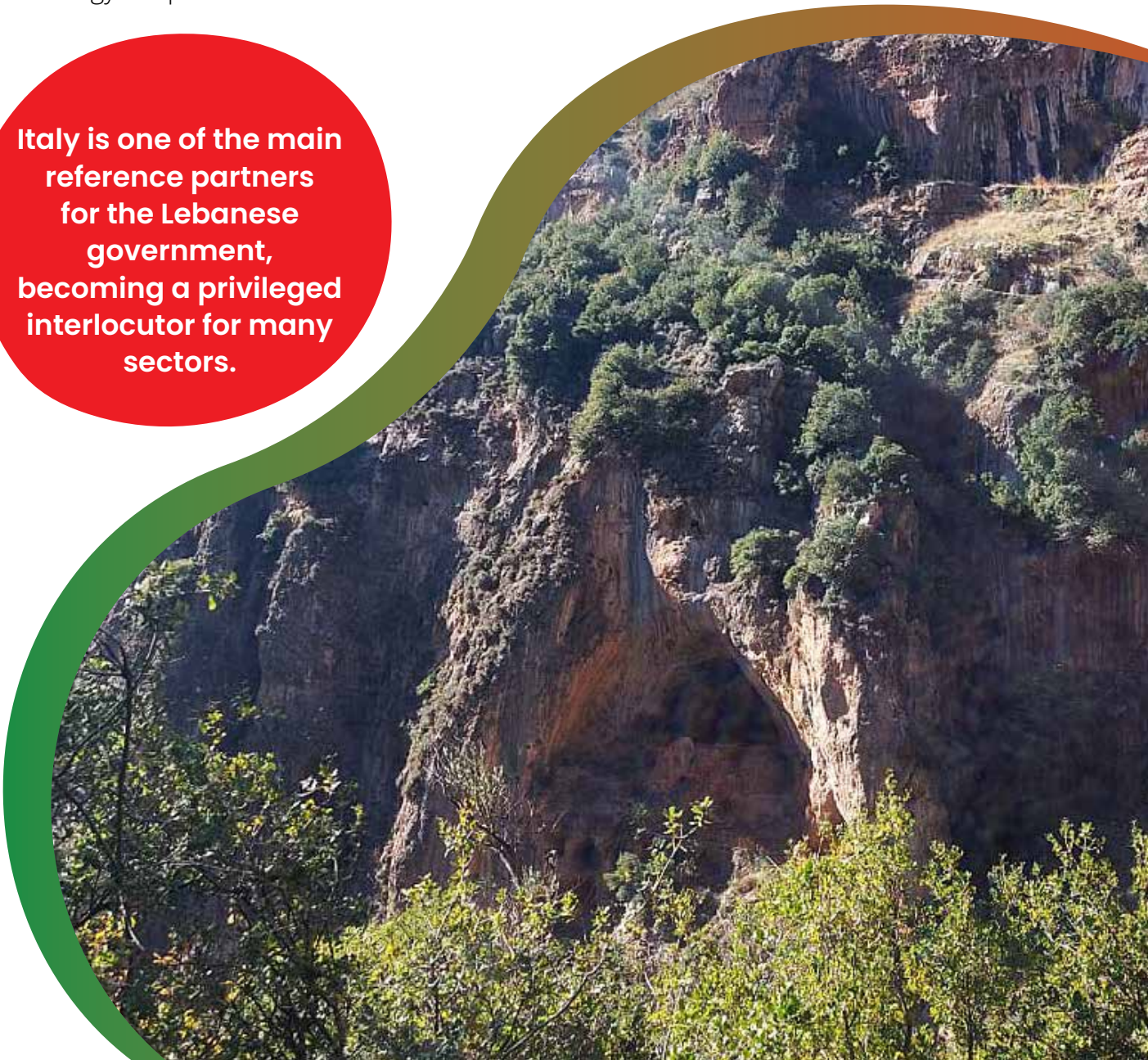
From 2012 to 2022, in the Cedar Country, Italian Cooperation has funded humanitarian aid initiatives (emergency and resilience) valued at more than 144 million euros. These humanitarian aid initiatives are complementary and integrated with the initiatives financed through the ordinary channel. Such initiatives support the reinforcement of the bond between humanitarian aid, development, and peace, and the establishment of partnerships with a wide network of government agencies, specialized UN agencies, Italian, international, and local CSOs, companies, and other relevant actors in the country.



Considering the Lebanese situation, marked by economic, humanitarian, and social crises, which have been intersecting for years and weighing dramatically on the daily life of the population, Italian Cooperation has been trying to combine emergency response with development processes. This is especially true in priority sectors such as health, education, and support. At the same time, sectors such as the environment and the protection of cultural heritage have remained central, establishing AICS as the privileged interlocutor of Lebanese institutions. The strategy adopted in most interventions

was to continue collaborating with public institutions at the national and local levels. Some programs related to the health sector involved the Ministry of Health (supply of medicines, participation in the implementation of the IT system for pharmaceutical tracking). Others involved the Ministry of Social Affairs, such as the work carried out with ISOSEP, a delegated cooperation project, in support of the services offered by the Ministry. In coordination with the Ministry of Education, initiatives are financing OSC to promote access to education for Lebanese and refugees, those of UNICEF

**Italy is one of the main reference partners for the Lebanese government, becoming a privileged interlocutor for many sectors.**



for infrastructural rehabilitation work in public schools, and those of WFP for the implementation of the school food program in public elementary schools.

Italy represents one of the main reference partners for the Lebanese government and has become a privileged interlocutor in many sectors.

The partners of AICS in Beirut are Lebanese institutions, UN agencies, and OSCs operating throughout the country, through initiatives that are part of the development and response plans to the various emergencies endorsed by the country's government. Italian Cooperation participates in numerous United Nations and European Union coordination groups, as well as joint ones of the United Nations, World Bank, and European Union for both humanitarian and development issues. In the framework of sectoral coordination, Italian Cooperation is an active donor for the WASH, Social Protection, Gender, Social Stability, and Livelihood sectors. Moreover, AICS Beirut adheres to the "Team Europe Initiatives" in the Education and WASH sectors.

With the European Union, in 2023, the HQ launched a delegated cooperation project in the social sector called ELISSA "EU 4 Lebanon - Inclusive Services for Social Activities" initiative that partially gives continuity to "ISOSEP - Integrated Social Services Provision," funded by the MADAD European Trust Fund. The objective is to

strengthen the services offered by Social Development Centers of the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs, to develop a referral mechanism toward specialized services offered by civil society, and to promote local economic development for an amount of 10 million euros.

In 2023, AICS Beirut Office managed numerous initiatives with a total value of 405,851,422.33 euros, of which Development Initiatives with soft loans accounted for a total of 80,721,999.26 euros and Humanitarian Aid and Resilience Initiatives with soft loans accounted for a total of 49,400,000.00 euros. There are 8 ongoing aid credit initiatives for a total of 133,878,526.78 euros. The AICS office in Beirut manages 2 Delegated Cooperation initiatives for a total of 14,500,000.00 euros.

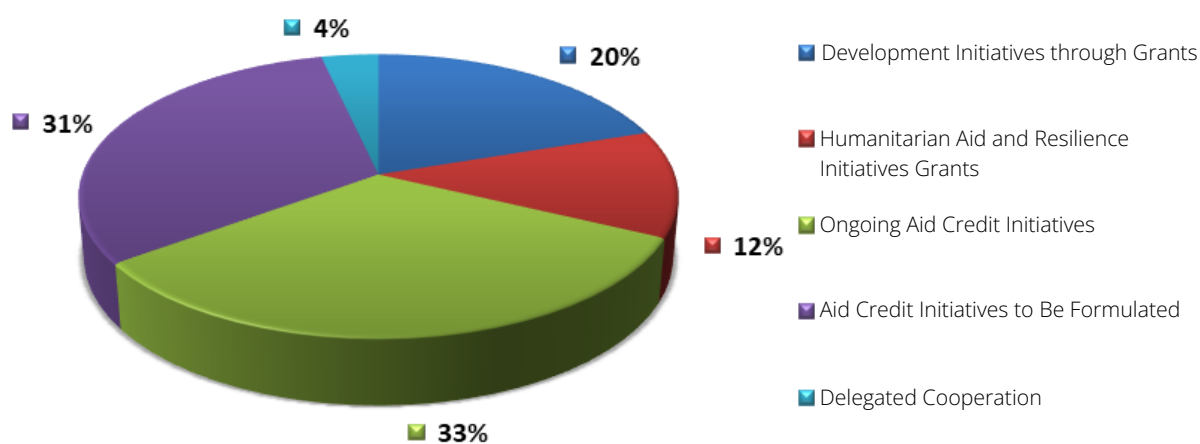


## Lebanon in Numbers As of 31 December 2023

### Initiatives in Lebanon in 2023

Initiatives in Lebanon	Numbers	Amount in Euros
Development Initiatives through Grants	52	80.721.999,26
Humanitarian Aid and Resilience Initiatives Grants	19	49.400.000,00
Ongoing Aid Credit Initiatives	8	133.878.526,78
Aid Credit Initiatives to Be Formulated		127.350.896,29
Delegated Cooperation	2	14.500.000,00
<b>Total Initiatives</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>405.851.422,33</b>

### Initiatives in Lebanon in 2023



## 7. Intervention Sectors Of The Italian Cooperation In Lebanon

### AGRICULTURE

Although 20-25% of the rural population depends on agriculture for its livelihood and important safety net role, especially following the various crises that have hit the country since 2019, not least the Ukraine-Russia crisis, in 2020, the agricultural sector had received only 0.35% of the state budget, an amount not exceeding 2% in the last 15 years.

These crises severely threaten food security due to rising production costs, which have led to a 700 percent increase in the average cost of food items from 2019 to 2021, forcing the average Lebanese family to spend, monthly, more than five times the minimum income.

The strategy of the Italian Cooperation in Lebanon, which has been remarkably effective, focuses mainly on:

**a. Supporting agrifood supply chains by promoting cooperativism.**

AICS supports the quality agro-industrial productivity of small and medium-sized local producers by promoting





environmentally and economically sustainable agriculture and organization throughout the production chain. By focusing on harvests that are both income-generating and nutritionally important, such as fruits and vegetables, olive oil, and spices, as well as other typical local products, the aim is to encourage the production and marketing of products that can take advantage of broad local and international demand, including through quality analysis and the introduction of innovations. Great attention is placed on cooperatives to enhance economic scale and to empower businesses in local and international markets, reducing costs and risks. The successful examples of supply chain projects implemented by Italian OSCs in Lebanon, despite the difficult situation of the agricultural sector in the country, show that cooperatives are key strategic partners for sustainable production.



#### **b. Support for the production of high-quality seeds and crops.**

AICS is funding an initiative carried out by CIHEAM Bari in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and the “Lebanese Agricultural Research Institute” for the multiplication of high-quality seeds, with a focus on soft wheat, the basic ingredient of Lebanese bread, an essential food in the country’s cuisine and nutrition for all income levels, and legumes, important low-cost nutritional sources. The recent situation in the country and the crisis between Ukraine and Russia have exponentially increased the need





for quality, nutritious, and sustainable national production.

Through the rehabilitation of a national seed testing laboratory, the establishment of demonstration fields, and technical support to farmers in terms of inputs, machinery, and knowledge, the aim is to stimulate seed multiplication and, subsequently, its productive use throughout Lebanon, starting with the most important agricultural areas. These activities are in line with new legislation to be developed with the Ministry of Agriculture and are complemented by a campaign to raise awareness among farmers, processors, the private sector, local and international organizations

active in the agricultural field, as well as Lebanese institutions.

Following the demands of the Lebanese authorities, AICS focuses on the significant contribution that agribusiness can make to health and sustainability by strengthening the link between nutrition and health and supporting the economy of rural areas through cooperatives, agricultural associations, and small and medium-sized enterprises. Innovation, technology, and research are a new method of planning, aimed at improving production, enhancing product marketing, and securing the territory.

The objective of this sector is to reach high-quality sustainable production that meets international standards while ensuring food security in the country and environmentally sustainable production.



## HUMANITARIAN AID

Lebanon has endured multiple crises that have exacerbated the situation in terms of deteriorating basic services and social stability, with increasing inequality, vulnerability, and protection risks, in the face of a considerable decrease in aid from the international community.

Three main crises persist in the country:

- a) the extended crisis related to the presence of 1.5 million Syrian refugees and about 250 thousand Palestinian refugees, the highest number of refugees per capita in the world;
- b) the socioeconomic crisis with a general increase in poverty levels and disruption of public systems for basic services for the entire population residing in Lebanon; and
- c) the conflict in the south that has caused victims, displacement, and destruction of property and livelihood since late 2023.

Syrian and Palestinian refugees live in hundreds of locations across the country and have access—primarily due to the financial contribution of the international community—to essential public services, including municipal services, health care, and education. Local institutions endure high pressure and lack sufficient resources to deliver basic services to Lebanese citizens and the refugee population. The prolongation of the conflict in Syria—combined with the

expanding financial and economic crisis in Lebanon and the consequences of COVID-19—has caused a gradual increase in the vulnerability of families in Lebanon, particularly Syrian families, with an increase in those living below the extreme poverty line from 55% in 2019 to over 90% in 2022.

The situation of minors in Lebanon is worrying, with indicators worsening over the past year in both health and education, specifically: an increase in neonatal mortality rates from 8.1% to 9.5% for Lebanese and from 10.1% to 12% for non-Lebanese (mainly Syrians and Palestinians); a decrease in vaccination coverage in the country from 90% to 67%; more than half of Syrian children do not attend school; an increase in child labor with more than 200,000 children involved; and early marriages with 22% of



Syrian girls aged 15-19 married.

Following the international community's humanitarian and stabilization strategies, the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), and the Emergency Response Plan (ERP), the Italian Cooperation's humanitarian actions for 2023 focused on the centrality of protection with a triple connection approach Humanitarian-Development-Peace. This aimed, on the one hand, to provide immediate assistance to vulnerable people to ensure that critical needs are met and, on the other hand, to support service delivery through national systems, including national response capacity.

In consideration of the regional humanitarian emergency generated by the Syrian crisis, in 2012, the Italian Cooperation launched initiatives in Syria and Lebanon. In Lebanon, from 2012 to 2023, the Italian Cooperation funded

humanitarian aid initiatives (emergency and resilience) with a value of more than 160 million euros. The initiatives funded respect the strategy set out in the LCRP, which aims to strengthen the resilience of refugees and host communities and preserve Lebanon's social and economic stability.

Persevering with the interventions of past years and based on the main humanitarian needs that occurred in the country during the year, the actions of the Italian Cooperation supported the response to the three crises described above with initiatives in the sectors of Education, Livelihoods, Protection, Water and Sanitation, in complementarity with what is planned on the ordinary channel and favoring the bilateral channel with the support of Italian OSCs, particularly rooted in the country, in partnership with local actors.

At the sectoral level, improving access to quality and inclusive education for all has been one of the main objectives of the Italian Cooperation's efforts as part of the country's ongoing crisis response.

In 2023, numerous initiatives were funded to decrease the phenomenon of school non-attendance, a consequence of the rising percentage of the population below the poverty line. UN agencies funded projects



related to this sector (particularly UNICEF, WFP, and UNRWA) and OSCs (AVSI, CESVI, COOPI, ICU, INTERSOS, JRS, STC, TDH-IT, WWGVC) to provide support to vulnerable Lebanese and refugee families to cover indirect costs related to school attendance (transportation, provision of educational materials, meals during school hours). At the same time, remedial classes were conducted, and informal educational support was provided to out-of-school refugee children to later facilitate their entry into regular school.

Interventions in the livelihoods sector, implemented in 2023 by Italian (ARCS, COOPI, ICU, OXFAM, WWGVC) and Lebanese CSOs, have created temporary employment for economically vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian citizens as well as in the rehabilitation of public works and delivery of basic services in municipalities characterized by the heavy presence of Syrian refugees.

Another form of humanitarian aid interventions is those in the WASH sector, implemented by UNICEF, and in the health sector, implemented by UNHCR, which contribute on the one hand to the partial coverage of primary and secondary medical care and on the other hand to the provision of water and sanitation services to refugees from Syria, housed in informal camps or communities.

To respond flexibly and immediately to the serious deterioration of the country's situation and to possible new humanitarian crises such as the one that started on October 7, 2023, as a result of the conflict

in the South, the Italian Cooperation has been supporting since 2019 UNOCHA's multi-donor fund, the Lebanon Humanitarian Fund (LHF). In 2023, the fund enabled the activation of protection interventions to support the most vulnerable population groups, using an area-based approach and promoting the localization of humanitarian aid through quality partnerships between international and local OSCs. In this regard, we highlight the LHF's first reserve allocation following the conflict and displacement in the south, which enabled the activation of more than US\$10M in projects at the beginning of November.

## ENVIRONMENT

Lebanon has a wide variety of ecosystems and natural resources, but the high rate of anthropization and the lack of an appropriate land management plan have caused anarchic construction and deforestation, creation of illegal



landfills, excessive use of fossil fuels, and pollution of air, water, and soil. This has had a strong negative impact on environmental quality and sustainability. The Syrian crisis and more recently the economic crisis have further increased pressure on natural resources and the environment. The cutting off of government electricity supply has led to the proliferation of private diesel generator use, causing the disruption of many essential services with high environmental impact normally provided by local and national authorities, such as wastewater treatment. Additionally, the economic crisis has reduced the ability of authorities to monitor and manage natural areas, which are increasingly subject to illegal exploitation through deforestation, hunting, and harvesting of other natural resources.

AICS Beirut headquarters has implemented a complete strategy over the past few years that, by addressing most environmental risks, has placed Italy among the top donors in the environment sector.

The main intervention sectors are:

#### **a. Solid Waste Management**

During 2023, the activities of the initiative “EROI - Environmental Rehabilitation through Strengthening Integrated Waste Management Systems” were successfully completed. This initiative, carried out with the Lebanese Ministry of Environment and UNDP, aimed to improve the management of urban solid waste in Lebanon through institutional support to the Ministry in terms of legislation, procedures, updating of pollutant limit values, the closure and remediation of a landfill, and the creation





of two leachate treatment tanks inside the Zahle landfill, which were connected to the adjacent wastewater treatment plant, also implemented by the Italian Cooperation. This demonstrated the excellent level of integration between initiatives in different sectors.

AICS is involved with another project implemented through the Ministry of the Environment and UNDP in the Bekaa Valley. This ongoing activity involves the rehabilitation of a landfill site to prevent leachate from being absorbed into the soil and subsequently contaminating the drinking and irrigation aquifers in the area, from which many municipalities and farmers extract necessary water. In addition to the initiatives mentioned above, there are two promoted projects and one with local authorities in Akkar, South, and Nabatiye governorates, expanding Italian intervention on a national level.

AICS Beirut formed the Solid Waste Management Coordination Table on a bimonthly basis, with the participation of the EU, WB, Ministry of Environment, and CSOs active in the field to enhance collaboration, benefit from complementarities, and avoid duplication, thereby improving the management of the entire system. AICS Beirut is actively participating in consultations to establish a national law for “cost recovery” in waste collection systems to create a quality and more sustainable process.

#### **b. Environmental Protection and Ecotourism Development**

Particular attention should be given to the UNDP-funded project “Step For Nature” on the protection of natural areas at the national level. This project includes



more than 40 Biosphere Reserves, Parks, Marine, and Wetland Areas and aims to increase the protection of ecosystems and sustainable use of the resources present, with special emphasis on the 18 official nature reserves. The initiative aims to intervene on the legal level, updating and improving present regulations and levels of protection of natural areas, as well as on the level of wilderness management, supporting managing figures with means, training, mapping, and the development of integrated management plans. Besides supporting environmental protection and conservation, the initiative promotes sustainable local and international ecotourism throughout the country.

### **c. Environmental Monitoring and Disaster Risk Reduction**

AICS Beirut is supporting the National Committee for Scientific Research of Lebanon (CNRS-L) with a project funded by CIHEAM Bari to support scientific research and “evidence-based decision making” and environmental monitoring in agriculture, Mediterranean Sea waters, and Lebanese natural areas. This is particularly through the development of the “Early Detection & Warning” system for forest fires and floods, using advanced technologies to enable constant monitoring of risk levels and the preventive activation of control and intervention systems. The initiative also involved researchers, doctoral students, and undergraduate and graduate students, promoting awareness toward marine and terrestrial environmental protection.

The Italian Cooperation, which has always been involved with initiatives aimed at protecting the environment and initiating ecologically sustainable development

processes, remains a reference donor in the environmental sector for many Lebanese institutional partners, including the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Energy and Water, the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, and various municipalities. Their interventions include environmental conservation, sustainable development of coastal areas and nature reserves, industrial pollution abatement, waste management, forest fire prevention, energy conservation, and renewable energy.



## HUMAN RIGHTS

Concerning the defense of human rights, Italian Cooperation collaborates with the Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities, the Internal Security Forces, and the Ministry of Justice to improve living conditions in Lebanese detention facilities for men, women, and youths. This includes initiatives to rehabilitate and equip detention facilities with renewable energy sources, provide essential goods such as medicines and sanitation devices, and

train assigned health personnel. Other efforts involve providing psychosocial support to prisoners and operational staff, offering vocational training and income generation activities aimed at post-detention employment opportunities, legal assistance to prisoners, introducing supervisory reforms, implementing alternative measures to detention and restorative justice. These interventions make our country one of the main donors active in this sector.

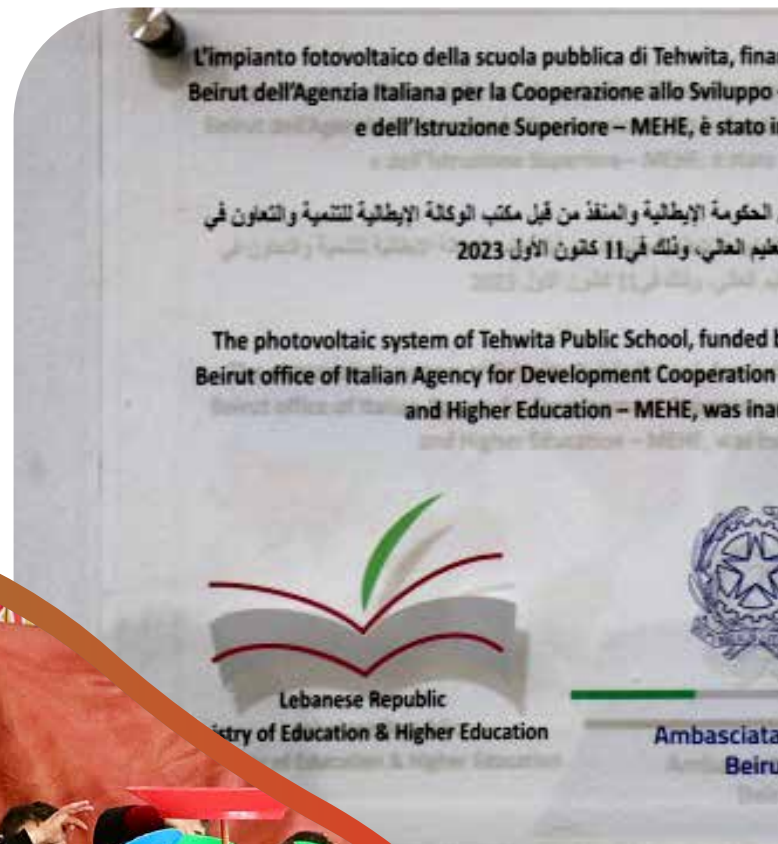
Project activities were concluded this year. They were carried out by Aics Beirut under the direct management of Italian OSC, ARCS, in partnership with local OSCs. The projects aimed to improve sanitary conditions inside detention institutions through the distribution of sanitary materials and medicines to prisoners; reduce overcrowding within penitentiary institutions through legal assistance to prisoners and advocacy for the use of alternative measures to detention; improve infrastructural conditions through maintenance interventions and the installation of photovoltaic systems in male and female prisons; and enhance social reintegration services for former prisoners at the Rabieh Rehabilitation Centre, providing day and night shelter services and vocational training.



## EDUCATION

The Lebanese education system, as well as the Syrian education system, faces significant challenges and problems due to the numerous crises and emergencies of the past 10 years. In Lebanon, the education system is under pressure from the large migration of Syrians into the country, in addition, the complex and severe economic crisis, which began in 2019, causes many families to move their children from private to public schools, 26 percent of families have children who do not attend school, and among Syrians the percentage rises to 52 percent (UNICEF, 2023). In addition, as a result of the repercussions of the conflict in Gaza in the southern part of the country, there are 23,700 displaced children from southern Lebanon who are currently out of the school system (UNICEF, 2024).

As of 2019, we can estimate that about 700,000 children have dropped out of school. Based on the multidimensional poverty index, an estimated 1.45 million school-age children need support to access education, including about 662,000 Lebanese (52% girls), more than 715,000 displaced Syrians (51% girls), about 13,300 migrants (73% girls), and about 56,000 Palestinian refugees (52% girls).







To challenge this crisis, AICS has developed a strategy focusing on 4 main pillars: rehabilitating schools, fostering primary education and child protection, promoting vocational training, and supporting school feeding (nutrition).

**School rehabilitation:** school buildings was rehabilitated to improve access to education and reduce school operation costs, such as energy costs, through the installation of solar panels.

### **Promoting education and child protection:**

access to education and social inclusion for the most vulnerable students were promoted by encouraging quality education and strengthening social services. Also taking into consideration disability issues.

### **Promotion of Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET):**

helped strengthen the vocational education system by improving its governance and management at the national level. A new project started in 2023 aimed at supporting the Ministry of Education's strategy toward a holistic, inclusive and sustainable TVET system. The intervention, conforming with the rules of the National Strategic Framework for Vocational Technical Education and Training in Lebanon 2023-2027, will be implemented through two complementary components, the first one under direct management and the second one assigned to an OSC. At the national level, the project will provide institutional support to the Directorate General of Technical Education and Vocational Training by rehabilitating the spaces of selected schools, conducting a feasibility study for the hotel and printing sectors, and strengthening the technical capacities of ministerial experts with the

aim of developing income generation mechanisms to ensure the financial sustainability of the Directorate. While at the local level, the intervention will grant a vocational training to meet employment market demand by updating sectoral curriculum vitae. Moreover, the initiative will foster partnerships between schools and other public and private actors to ensure employment opportunities for vulnerable students.

**Nutrition:** the main goal of the action was to help maintain school attendance: increasing students' ability to concentrate during school hours by providing snacks and improving children's intake of nutritious foods.

### WATER RESOURCES AND WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT

Since the first projects in 1983, Italy has been committed to developing infrastructure aimed at improving public services, promoting sustainable development, and protecting the environment. Currently, with an investment of about 252 million euros in aid credit, Italy is supporting the Lebanese government in improving its infrastructure sector by building wastewater treatment plants, sewerage systems, and drinking water supply systems throughout Lebanon.

The strategies adopted for these initiatives aim to: 1) meet the population's demand for drinking water and improve sanitary conditions; 2) eliminate direct discharges to the environment and equip the population with adequate sewerage and wastewater treatment systems to improve hygienic and environmental



conditions and reduce pollution of rivers and the sea; 3) transfer technology and skills through technical assistance and training to enhance the technical, operational, and management capacities of local authorities; and 4) improve integrated waste management by building the capacity of authorities in land management, delivering essential services for local development, and reducing industrial environmental pollution.

Furthermore, thanks to a soft loan, the Italian Cooperation built a wastewater treatment plant and sewerage system in the city of Zahle, which has been in



operation since 2017. This wastewater treatment plant is considered an excellent component in the region for being the only one with tertiary treatment and complying with international standards. Considering the heavy socio-economic crisis that has hit Lebanon since the end of 2019 and weighed on the resources of local public institutions, the Italian Cooperation subsequently approved a grant contribution of €4 million to the UNDP to support a private operator for an additional two years to ensure the ongoing operation of the Zahle plant. Currently, management is ongoing with

positive results.

Italian Cooperation is also involved in improving public safety and health facilities, such as the renovation of the Baabda Public University Hospital, completed in 2023. Thanks to Italian aid, the hospital increased its capacity from 40 to 120 beds and was able to provide care and diagnostics to citizens during the most critical phases of the Covid-19 epidemic.

Two infrastructure projects, involving drinking water, sewage, and water treatment systems and amounting to approximately 65 million euros, are currently underway despite the direct effects of the economic crisis on the sector. These effects include the management capacities of local authorities, difficulties in obtaining materials, and increased costs due to inflation. The launch of other planned infrastructure projects is currently on hold due to Lebanon's critical institutional and economic situation.

During this period, some components of infrastructure work related to other sectors were also completed. These mainly concern photovoltaic installations for electricity production in schools, public institutions, and prisons to address the electricity shortage in the country.





## CULTURAL HERITAGE

The Italian Cooperation is constantly committed to supporting Lebanon's exceptional and diverse cultural heritage. Preservation and protection are the guiding principles of Italian interventions in various sites damaged by conflict and neglect due to a lack of local funding, with some seriously damaged following the Beirut port explosion in August 2020. Italy's commitment to the conservation and enhancement of Lebanon's cultural and natural heritage is recognized and appreciated for its expertise and ability to mobilize experts and innovative techniques for restoration, conservation of architectural and decorative elements, and consolidation of the structures themselves.

The interventions implemented, with a view to tourism enhancement and development, concretely contribute to

making the sites accessible to both local people and visitors, as well as strengthening the bond between the community and territory by increasing the sense of belonging.

In general, the initiatives implemented by the Italian Cooperation help to provide technical and institutional assistance; improve infrastructure and services at historic sites to create jobs and development; engage communities to apprehend a shared vision of development, benefiting local communities and tourists; encourage communication, learning, and training; and improve social cohesion by promoting cultural heritage as a base of identity.

After the 2020 explosion that devastated the Lebanese capital's historic and cultural center, Italy was among the first donor countries to commit to the rebirth and revitalization of Beirut's cultural life. Italian





efforts in response to the emergency also focused on the rehabilitation of buildings and historic sites affected by the blast wave that caused extensive damage. The UNESCO-funded project enabled

the structural rehabilitation works at the Sursock Museum in Beirut, where solar panels were also installed to ensure energy sustainability. A ceremony to return the building to the public was organized in May 2023.



During 2023, other projects in the sector were completed, inaugurated, and returned to partners despite difficulties that slowed execution by project suppliers. In this regard, it is worth noting the closing of the intervention in cooperation with UNESCO for the rehabilitation of the sanctuaries and monasteries in the Qadisha Valley, and the ceremony for the conclusion of the restoration work at the Baalbek archaeological site.

Thanks to the intervention of the Italian Cooperation, it is possible to admire the six monumental columns that stand out in the Baalbek archaeological site, in a splendor renewed by the meticulous cleaning work carried out by Italian experts, who also worked on their consolidation and preservation.

## HEALTH

As part of the collaboration with the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health, a multi-bilateral initiative in partnership with the World Health Organization to strengthen the public health system was launched and is still ongoing.

The first component aims to promote the use of the “MediTrack” computer system by private pharmacies, public and private hospitals, medicine manufacturers, and importers to ensure the traceability and quality verification of medicines. This initiative involves supporting the Responsible Unit within the Ministry and providing and training participants in the use of appropriate barcode readers.

The second component aims to upgrade the emergency services of seven public suburban hospitals. This initiative involves training medical and paramedical staff, providing essential

equipment for their operation, and improving the quality of services.

Additionally, the initiative complements the actions of the Italian Cooperation, which has funded the WHO through the emergency channel to purchase and distribute pediatric medicines for tumor patients, as part of a rapid response to the multiple crises in Lebanon.



## SOCIAL

Italian Cooperation is one of the privileged partners of the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs. The Italian commitment in the social development sector is aimed at vulnerable groups, women, and children. Ongoing initiatives are included in the Ministry's development policies. Specifically, Italian Cooperation is engaged in strengthening the services provided by the Social Development Centers located throughout the country, serving as a point of reference for the Lebanese and refugee populations in need of social, psychosocial, and basic medical services. Italian Cooperation works with the Ministry to support child prevention and protection policies and systems at both the national and local levels. In several municipalities, we promote youth participation in local governance through the establishment of municipal youth councils as a means of involving youth in government decision-making processes, raising awareness of issues related to active citizenship, and



promoting and implementing projects related to children's rights.

The strategy adopted involves an integrated approach to various dimensions related to youth participation in local governance, the strengthening of territorial child protection networks, the child prevention and protection system, and child awareness and problem analysis.

## LOCAL DEVELOPMENT/ GOVERNANCE

Local development is an effective tool to combat poverty and unemployment. At different levels and through multi-sectoral projects, Italian Cooperation intervenes in this direction. One of the main objectives of Italian-funded initiatives in the sector is to support local authorities by equipping them with reliable and efficient tools to meet the basic needs of the population.

Following a multilateral initiative, Italian Cooperation funded UN Habitat with the aim of strengthening the planning capacities of the Unions of Municipalities and the Social Development Centers of the Ministry of Social Affairs. Local strategic plans were developed in 10 Unions of Municipalities, identifying areas aimed at improving the socioeconomic conditions of the population.

Based on the results achieved, AICS Beirut will support projects entrusted to OSCs that may consider the strategic plans developed under the initiative, with a view to developing territorial socio-economic action plans. Therefore, OSCs' interventions will aim, on the one hand, to support local economic actors and local institutions to increase their resilience, expand markets, and create new socially impactful job opportunities, and on the other hand, to enhance labor market access for the most vulnerable. The approach taken will focus on territorial development and partnerships.







## 8. Promoted Projects

La sede AICS di Beirut ha contribuito al monitoraggio, in sinergia con la Sede Centrale, degli interventi promossi da Organizzazioni della Società Civile italiana; si tratta di 13 programmi per un finanziamento di circa 27.8 milioni di Euro. In particolare, questi interventi riguardano i settori dell'ambiente, agricoltura, educazione, affari sociali e genere, rifugiati e sviluppo locale.

## 9. Territorial Entities

La sede AICS di Beirut ha contribuito al monitoraggio in sinergia con la Sede Centrale degli interventi promossi da Enti Territoriali italiani; si tratta di 4 programmi per un finanziamento di circa 5 milioni di Euro. Sono interventi portati avanti dal Comune di Fontecchio (AQ), dal Comune di Fano (PU), dal Comune di Tricase (LE) e dal Comune di Marsala con un particolare attenzione sui settori dell'ambiente e dello sviluppo locale.



## 10. EU Delegated Cooperation



The European Union Regional Trust Fund, also known as the “MADAD Fund,” finances the implementation of emergency interventions, reconstruction of infrastructure, and rehabilitation of social services in countries affected by the Syrian crisis. Italy was the first Member State to join the Fund, acquiring the status of Permanent Deputy Chair of this new instrument. Among the proposals approved by the MADAD Fund is the ISOSEP program, “Integrated Social Services Provision to Lebanese and Syrian Refugee Communities in Lebanon.”

### **ISOSEP - Integrated Social Services Provision to Lebanese and Syrian Refugee Communities in Lebanon**

ISOSEP is a delegated cooperation project to support Lebanon’s social

sector, signed by AICS in December 2020, with a 51-month funding of €4,500,000. The overall objective of the initiative is to improve the welfare of Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese communities, regardless of nationality and gender, with a focus on children and women. The specific objective is to strengthen the social protection services offered by the Social Development Centers (SDCs) of the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) and its civil society partners. The project capitalizes on Italian Cooperation’s long-



standing collaboration with MoSA aimed at developing the tools needed by the SDCs and offering quality integrated social and health services.

### The initiative has two components:

- ▶ Strengthening the capacity and expertise of the Ministry of Social Affairs and 32 SDCs.
- ▶ Provision of integrated basic and specialized services to local communities through the network of SDCs.

### The program has three priority intervention sectors:

- ▶ Digitization of practices

to make service delivery more efficient and collect necessary data more systematically.

- ▶ The improvement of facilities to make them more welcoming, sustainable, and focused on people's needs.
- ▶ The setting of standards in the delivery of quality social and health services.

### During 2023, the following activities were carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs:

- ▶ The configuration of a new server for MoSA to be installed in 2024 has been finalized, and the implementation of an IT

system in the 32 centers has begun to improve service delivery and data collection.

- ▶ Planning started for the renovation works of 10 SDCs, and tenders have been launched for the



execution of works in 7 centers.

- ▶ Two grants were awarded to two OSCs who will act to facilitate the 32 SDCs in delivering services to local communities.

### **ELISSA – EU 4 Lebanon – Inclusive Services for Social Actions**

ELISSA was established and is being developed as a continuation and expansion of ISOSEP to

continue strengthening the social sector in Lebanon. In December 2022, AICS signed an agreement with the EU to fund this initiative with €10,000,000 for a duration of 42 months. The aim of the initiative is to improve the living conditions and resilience of Syrian refugees and Lebanese host communities by strengthening access to inclusive social services and economic opportunities. The main local partner is the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), its regional departments, and 36 Social Development Centers (SDCs). As with ISOSEP, the initiative has two components: one aimed at strengthening the capacities of institutions to respond to the needs of the population and one of immediate response to them. Other sectors relevant to the ISOSEP program include economic opportunities, vocational training, and local development. Implementation began in late 2023 with some elementary activities and identification of the 36 SDCs to be involved in the initiative.



# Syria During 2023





**Area:**  
185 180 km<sup>2</sup>  
**Population:**  
18,906,907 (estimation)  
**Type of Government:**  
Parliamentary Republic  
**Capital:**  
Damascus

# 1. General Context

Syria is enduring an extended humanitarian crisis brought on by 12 years of hostilities and the combined action of multiple factors, which include a progressive economic tightening, a severe health crisis, and the repercussions of the February 2023 earthquakes have affected a large area between southern Turkey and northern Syria.

OCHA had estimated that about 15.3 million people in Syria would need humanitarian assistance in 2023, the highest figure since the start of hostilities. After the earthquake, OCHA's estimates showed that about 4.9 million people required humanitarian aid. The earthquake and subsequent earthquake swarm led to more than 5,900 deaths, 11,200 wounded, and tens of thousands of newly displaced people, mainly in Aleppo, Idleb, Hama, and Latakia Governorates. The Syria Earthquake 2023 Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (Serdna)[1] estimates that more than 87,000 housing units were destroyed or damaged. Syria also faces the world's most severe displacement crisis, with an estimated 6.7 million internally displaced persons.

In the last trimester of 2023, there has been an escalation of hostilities, particularly in areas of mixed or queried control and border lines, but these remain unchanged. OHCHR counted

454 civilian victims between January and October 2023. Additionally, the wide presence of unexploded ordnance remains a major security concern in most parts of the country.

Macroeconomic data illustrate a gradual deterioration of the economic situation, with GDP declining by 4 percent from 2022.[2] The cumulative

impacts of currency depreciation, rising prices of essential goods, reduced government spending, and economic sanctions have brought additional

segments of the population, even in areas historically less affected by hostilities, into humanitarian need, increasing poverty and the population's dependency on humanitarian

assistance. In October 2023, the cost of living quadrupled compared





to October 2021; a family earning a minimum salary today can only afford one-tenth of its monthly essential needs. Due to its geographical location, Syria is vulnerable to climate variability and impacts related to climate change. Over the past four years, low rainfall and low water levels in the Euphrates River have severely affected agricultural production, particularly in the northeast of the country. Around 66% of the Syrian population is suffering from food

insecurity.

Electricity and fuel shortages prevent the optimal functioning of water systems, health facilities, schools, markets, bakeries, and other essential infrastructure, reduce the productive capacity of local businesses and industries, and discourage new investment in productive sectors.

The shortage of public resources has led to the failure of national systems



responsible for public service provisions. The Syrian government budget in 2023 corresponds to about 25% of the 2011 budget, amounting to USD 256 per person; allocations for the education sector represent 3.8% of the total budget in 2023, allocations for the health sector 4.9%, WASH 1%, and social assistance 0.05%.[3]

People's access to basic services across Syria continues to decline, hampered by damaged infrastructure, lack of essential supplies, and declining purchasing power. Before the earthquake, Syria was suffering from a serious health crisis, caused by the worsening of socioeconomic conditions and the lack of fully operational health facilities.

Domestic water deficiency and food insecurity have contributed to increases in waterborne diseases and deteriorating nutritional status, especially among children, pregnant women, and nursing women. In September 2022, the Syrian Ministry of Health reported a cholera

epidemic attributed to deteriorating socioeconomic conditions and the water crisis. This epidemic spread rapidly throughout the governorates, contributing to overburdening the already weak health system and increasing illness and mortality among the most vulnerable groups. Several concerns regarding the protection of women and girls continue to exist in Syria, one of the most vulnerable groups in the country, from their possible exposure to various forms of gender-based violence. Forced or early marriages continue to be a common practice, often related to the precarious economic conditions of families. Widowed or divorced women suffer from a lack of security and stability, and they are often victims of psychological violence from both their families and the community, in addition to being restricted in their movements and enjoyment of basic rights. HNO 2024 estimates that 8.5 million individuals, 93% of whom are women and girls, need assistance related to gender-based violence.[4]



[1] World Bank, Syria Earthquake 2023 Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment

[2] InfoMercatiEsteri data from thr Farnesina, 2023

[3] UNICEF, October 2023

[4] Humanitarian Needs Overviews – HNO 2024

## 2. International Cooperation In Syria

The international community is involved in Syria, responding to numerous challenges and providing assistance to the Syrian people. The “Syria Humanitarian Response Plan” serves as the strategic framework for the humanitarian response in Syria (HRP) for 2022 - 2023. This plan was developed by the United Nations on behalf of humanitarian partners working in Syria, under the guidance of the Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria and the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syrian Crisis. The HRP for 2022-2023 has three strategic objectives:

1. To provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable, with a focus on areas of high severity of need.
2. To improve the prevention and mitigation of protection risks and respond to protection needs through the promotion of international law, international humanitarian law, and international human rights law, as well as through quality assistance based on humanitarian principles.
3. To increase community resilience by improving access to livelihood opportunities and basic services, particularly for the most vulnerable



families and communities.

The intervention of HRP in Syria covers all Syrian territory, including areas controlled by the opposition. Activities are carried out by United Nations agencies and national and international NGOs within the framework of agreements between the Syrian state and humanitarian agencies, and under relevant UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. The international community, UN Agencies, international OSCs, and local civil society collaborate on the crisis response, operating from different humanitarian aid management points, known as “hubs”. Interventions are carried out through various coordination methods and mechanisms:

- The “Syria Humanitarian Country Team” coordinates interventions in areas under

government control and some opposition-controlled areas of northeastern Syria (crossline assistance).

- The "Syria Cross-Border Humanitarian Liaison Group" coordinates interventions implemented in northwestern Syria from Turkey.

- The "Northeast Syria (NES) NGO Forum" coordinates interventions in northeastern Syria, including using logistical bases in Iraqi Kurdistan.



### 3. Italian Cooperation in Syria



From 2012 to 2023, Italian Cooperation has funded initiatives in Syria with a value of more than 160 million euros. These initiatives were carried out by specialized agencies of the United Nations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and the AICS office in Beirut in collaboration with OSC.

The initiatives share the same objectives as the humanitarian response plans set out by the United Nations: to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance, respond to the protection needs of civilians, and increase the resilience of communities by improving access to livelihood opportunities and basic services.

In 2023, ongoing initiatives have a value of approximately 81.25 million euros, divided into 60.25 million for initiatives funded through the “emergency” channel and 21 million for initiatives through the “ordinary” channel. These interventions are implemented by United Nations Agencies and International Organizations (totaling 49.2 million euros), OSCs selected through Call for Proposals (totaling 30 million euros), and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) for a total of 2 million euros. The initiatives are carried out in different regions of the country, both in government-controlled areas and areas controlled by de facto authorities and non-state armed groups.

The programs funded by Italian



Cooperation have an intersectoral focus on protecting the most vulnerable groups, supporting minors, youth, the elderly, women, people with chronic diseases, disabilities and injuries, people with different levels of autonomy, displaced people in and out of camps, and returnees, especially if they are heads of families, as well as Palestinian refugees.

Lately, Italian Cooperation in Syria has been using the area-based approach, an approach that responds to the needs of the population in a multisectoral way and aims to create synergies so that the activities implemented have a greater impact on the beneficiaries. Interventions are implemented through multi-agency programs, in which two or more UN agencies work jointly to address the needs of the population in a specific area with an integrated approach (area-based integrated approach). The Syrian crisis necessitates expanding this approach and responding more from an early recovery perspective across all sectors of intervention, from food security and livelihoods to sexual and reproductive health, and

promoting the protection of women and girls.

OSC's programs also adhere to this approach. OSCs are invited to submit projects that are multisectoral or create



synergies with other projects already being implemented in the same area to maximize their impact. The initiatives promoted by Italian Cooperation contribute to the achievement of the three objectives/pillars of the

Humanitarian Response Plan for the country, the “Humanitarian Response Plan.” Specifically, the main areas of intervention are:

1. Protection (child protection, gender equality, and protection of persons with disabilities).
2. Food Security and Livelihood (from distributions to agriculture and income-generating activities).
3. Education (Education in emergencies - support for access to quality basic education services, light rehabilitation of schools, training for teachers and social workers; nonformal education as a basis for formal education).
4. Health (light rehabilitation activities and strengthening of basic health services, first aid services, reproductive, maternal-child, and pediatric health services).
5. Early Recovery (activities that promote access to basic services and enable people to become independent from outside help).



## Dati Siria Iniziative 2023

The earthquakes in Turkey and Syria in February 2023 impacted a civilian population already exhausted by years of hostilities and an extended humanitarian crisis. In response, OCHA issued a Flash Appeal with a three-month duration and a budget of US\$397.6 million, aiming to aid people with the most urgent humanitarian needs in the affected areas. The Flash Appeal has three strategic objectives: (i) to provide timely, multi-sectoral, life-saving humanitarian assistance to those affected by the earthquake; (ii) to support livelihoods and access to basic services in the affected areas; and (iii) to ensure the protection of those affected by the consequences of the earthquake, considering specific needs related to age, gender, and disability.

Italian Cooperation promptly responded to the new humanitarian emergency to ensure aid to the affected population. Immediately after the earthquake, Italy sent tents and equipment for reception centers and camps for displaced people to Damascus, provided by the Italian Civil Defence, as well as medical supplies and equipment donated by the San Donato Group. In February, Italian Cooperation also disbursed a contribution of 750,000 euros to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and a







contribution of 1 million euros to the Syrian Red Crescent for the distribution of food and personal hygiene kits in the affected governorates of Hama, Idlib, Aleppo, and Latakia.

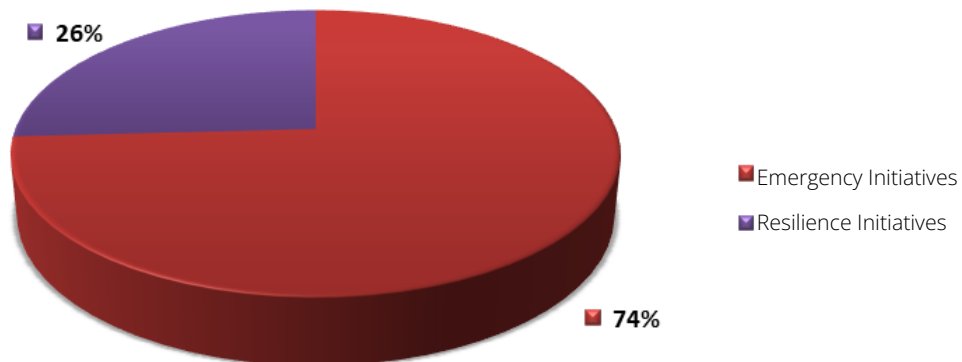
Ten days after the earthquake, AICS Beirut Headquarters issued a “primary emergency” notice, with a value of three million euros, to fund aid initiatives by Italian OSCs active in the country. This procedure allowed for the rapid disbursement of funding, and in a short time, projects funded for Aibi, Avsi, Coopi, Intersos, Tdh-Italy, and We World-Gvc were launched for interventions in Aleppo and Latakia, as well as in small towns and rural communities in the governorates of Hama and Idlib. These projects are carried out in synergy with those already initiated by OSCs through funds raised from private donors and thanks to the reshaping of projects funded before the earthquake, including those by Italian Cooperation. Interventions vary from distributing meals at shelters for displaced people to providing cash assistance for vulnerable families, personal hygiene kits, remedial schooling, and minor rehabilitation work for earthquake-damaged schools and water infrastructure, along with psychological support interventions, especially for children.

## SYRIA IN NUMBERS AS OF 31 DECEMBER 2023

## Initiatives in Syria in 2023

Initiatives in Syria during 2023	Numbers	Amount in Euros
Emergency Initiatives	28	60.250.000,00
Resilience Initiatives	9	21.000.000,00
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>81.250.000,00</b>

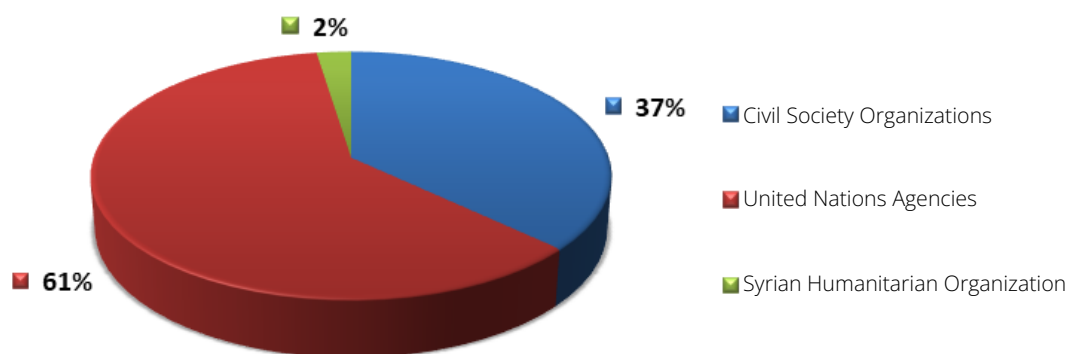
## Initiatives in Syria in 2023



## Implementing Entities in Syria in 2023

Implementing Entities in Syria in 2023	Amount in Euros
Civil Society Organizations	30.000.000,00
United Nations Agencies	49.250.000,00
Syrian Humanitarian Organization	2.000.000,00
<b>Total</b>	<b>81.250.000,00</b>

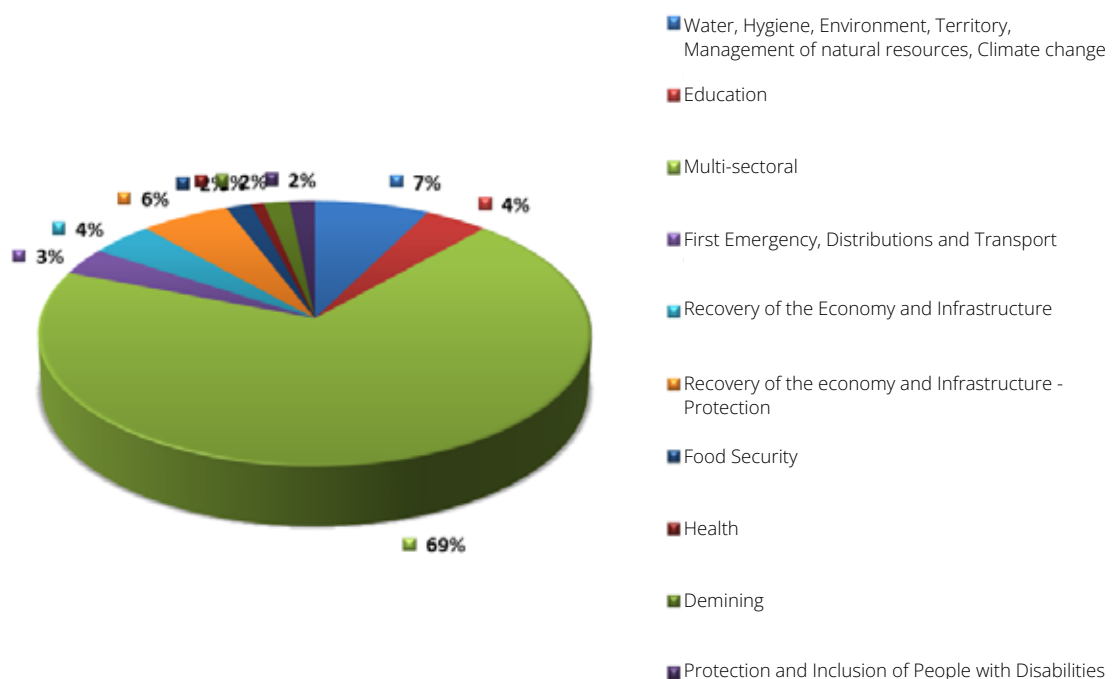
## Implementing Entities in Syria in 2023



## Emergency Sectors in 2023

Emergency Sectors in 2023	Amount in Euros
Water, Hygiene, Environment, Territory, Management of Natural Resources, Climate Change	4.500.000,00
Education	2.500.000,00
Multi-sectoral	41.750.000,00
First Emergency, Distributions and Transport	2.000.000,00
Recovery of the Economy and Infrastructure	2.500.000,00
Recovery of the economy and Infrastructure - Protection	3.500.000,00
Food Security	1.000.000,00
health	500.000,00
Demining	1,000,000.00
Protection And Inclusion of People with Disabilities	1.000.000,00
<b>Total</b>	<b>60.250.000,00</b>

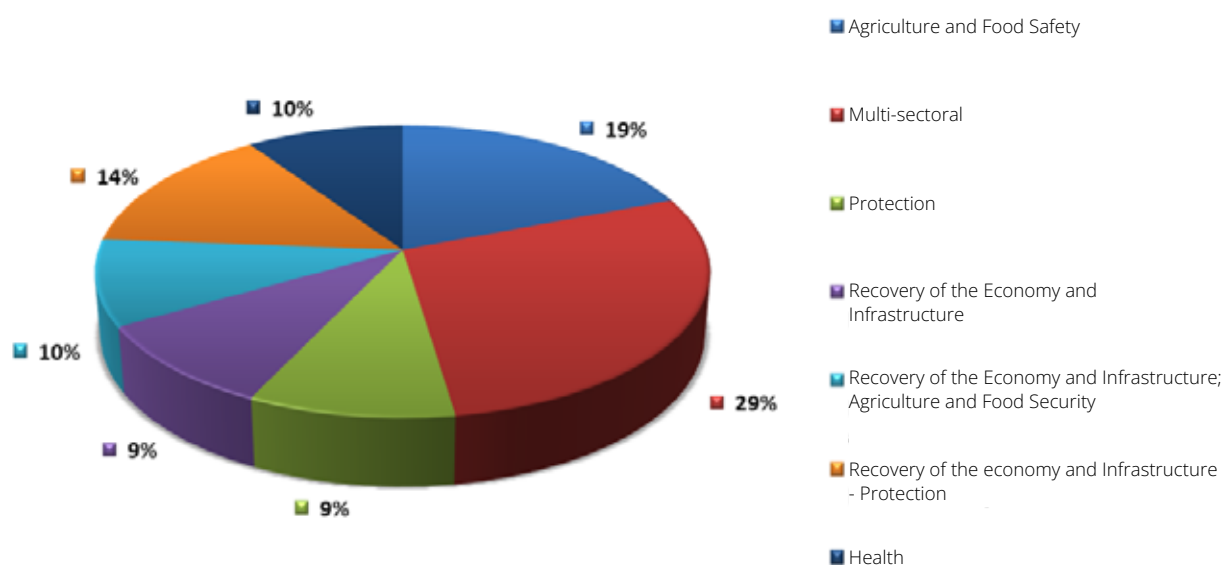
## Emergency Sectors in 2023



### Resilience Sectors in 2023

Resilience Sectors in 2023	Amount in Euros
Agriculture and Food Security	4.000.000,00
Multi-sectoral	6.000.000,00
Protection	2.000.000,00
Recovery of the Economy and Infrastructure	2.000.000,00
Recovery of the Economy and Infrastructure; Agriculture and Food Security	2.000.000,00
Recovery of the economy and Infrastructure - Protection	3.000.000,00
Health	2.000.000,00
<b>Total</b>	<b>21.000.000,00</b>

### Resilience sectors in 2023



## Communication and Visibility

**The** role of communication and information has, for AICS, always been of primary value; the commitment to make it so is concretely implemented in the Guidelines for Communication (LG-COM) drafted in 2018 and updated during 2023, which defined the regulatory framework that has been emerging in recent years, highlighted the centrality of the role of communication as a strategic





support to cooperation initiatives. This makes it possible to establish a solid link between communication and participation in development that involves the contribution of social forces and dynamics expressed by civil society, governments, and the set of partners at the implementation stage of these interventions.

AICS Beirut always communicates in a narrative mode; several actions undertaken in the Italian and Lebanese media have made the visibility of the actions undertaken by the Headquarters more effective. To mention: for the Italian press, there was a full TV report broadcast by the Rainews channel on

the restoration work for preserving the Baalbek tourist sites and the Sursock Museum. The Italian magazine *Archeo* produced a special edition on Italy's extensive, rich, and fruitful intervention in cultural heritage preservation. The Headquarters has created numerous video messages in collaboration with implementing entities. These videos can be found in the video section of the Headquarters' website. Additionally, video material such as commercials, slides, infographics, interviews, and testimonials has been produced and shared through AICS Beirut's institutional channel and the Headquarters' YouTube channel.



# Annual Report 2023

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Beirut – Lebanon & Syria



Presidential Palace Street  
Kettaneh Bldg. – 2<sup>nd</sup> flr. Baabda



Tel. +961 (0)5 951376/377/378



[www.beirut.aics.gov.it](http://www.beirut.aics.gov.it)



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