

Lebanon

CULTURAL HERITAGE AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Urban Development Sector

Project Number: P050529 – Specific Investment Loan

Loan Amount/Project Costs: \$31.5 million/\$61.9 million

Cost of Cultural Heritage Component: \$61.9 million (100 percent of total project costs)

Task Manager: Mohammed Feghoul

Fiscal Year of Bank Approval: 2003

Project objectives, activities, and preparation plans or implementation status

This project's objectives are to increase economic development and enhance the quality of life in the historic centers of five secondary cities of Lebanon, and to improve the conservation and management of Lebanon's built cultural heritage. Of the five secondary cities, Tripoli and Saïda possess compact historic centers with well-preserved old medinas and impressive citadels, while Baalbeck, Tyre, and Byblos are famous for their archeological sites (which are on the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's World Heritage list). All five cities have suffered serious physical damage, lack social services, and are experiencing economic stagnation. The proposed urban regeneration programs are tailored to each city's character and potential, but all include:

- Implementation of heritage-sensitive zoning and building regulations, allowing for urban revival and growth.
- Investments in public services and beautification.
- Measures to support economic development, including, in some cases, rehabilitation of private housing.

Physical investments and site management assistance are being prepared for the archaeological sites of Baalbeck and Tyre. To better achieve its proposed goals, the project is also building the capacity of participating cities and of national authorities responsible for cultural heritage preservation and urban planning.

The project was approved by the Bank's Board of Directors on 17 April 2003 and became effective on 1 July 2003. It is being cofinanced by the Agence Française de Développement and the governments of France and Italy. Extensive work has been conducted with the participating cities and central heritage authorities, who fully own the project. Project management staff are now being contracted.

Project benefits

Through its historic cities rehabilitation program, the project supports preservation and adaptive reuse of historic built assets and reinforces the heritage-related economic base of the five project cities. It will strengthen the cities' capacity to respond to the socioeconomic needs of their inhabitants by developing tourism and related services and products, and supporting local economic initiatives related to cultural activities. It will also support the institutional reform of cultural heritage authorities and help update and rationalize heritage laws and regulations. The project's main contribution to government policies for cultural heritage is expected to be achieved by developing and testing innovative urban planning tools in urban heritage areas (preservation and rehabilitation plans, zoning and building regulations, heritage preservation norms and incentives) and by rationalizing cultural heritage asset management practices (inventorying heritage assets, reporting, planning, and evaluating preservation operations throughout the country).

Preparation or implementation challenges

The project's main preparation challenges included:

- Establishing a trusted working relationship with the central cultural heritage authorities, who had already initiated regulatory and institutional reform.
- Learning about and responding to the rehabilitation needs of the five selected cities.
- Building partnerships and consensus with and securing financing from other international donors participating in the project.

Overcoming the financial and technical capacity limitations of the participating cities and national cultural heritage authorities is expected to be a major implementation challenge for the project.