AFDC: SUPPORTING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND AWARENESS IN LEBANON

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The Association for Forests, Development and Conservation (AFDC) is a Lebanese non-profit, non-governmental organization that aims to achieve sustainable development and conservation of natural resources, with a focus on forests. It works with an integrated management approach, by building technical and scientific capacities and raising awareness with the help of local communities and the public and private sectors.

Through its Environmental Education Program, AFDC aims to create a positive attitude towards the environment among young generations and within local communities. More specifically, AFDC works on:

- Building the capacity of schools’ approach to environmental challenges and constraints, and the integration of the concept of nature conservation and sustainable development within school programs.
- Establishing effective partnerships with the Ministry of Education and the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD) to update the National Strategy for Environmental Education.
- Integrating the Environmental Education Curriculum in new schools’ curricula to reflect the main environmental threats and challenges such as climate change, resiliency and sustainable development.
- Creating long-term partnerships with schools to monitor attained results and draw lessons to ensure sustainability.

Since its establishment, AFDC has been one of the leading NOGs tackling environmental education, with different partners including NGOs, academic institutions and public authorities. In 2011, AFDC entered a partnership with the Ministry of Education to develop the National Strategy for Environmental Education, which was subsequently adopted in 2012. Consequently, AFDC has worked in close cooperation with CERD – the national center responsible for the development of national curricula – to evaluate the integration of environmental education concepts within the existing educational curriculum, dating from 1997, and to propose a new curriculum accordingly. As a result, a new Environmental Education Curriculum for Cycle I (Grades 1, 2 and 3) and Cycle II (Grades 4, 5 and 6) was developed, that will be integrated into the updated national curriculum by 2020.

In addition to the work being done at the level of schools with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, AFDC works on developing effective tools to promote environmental education and raise awareness about different environmental challenges, such as solid waste management. In this regard, it implements the “Awareness on Wheels” project, in which a mobile unit conducts educational tours at schools and communities to raise awareness about the importance of adopting an integrated solid waste management approach and to highlight good practices. Finally, the AFDC developed “Sanjoub”, a forest-fires awareness mascot to make awareness on forest fires in schools and communities more fun and accessible.