



United Nations  
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Organisation  
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Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

Regional Conference "*Literacy challenges in the Arab Region:*"  
Building partnerships and promoting innovative approaches,  
Doha, Qatar, 12-14 March 2007

"UNILIT"

**Programme name: UNILIT**

**Implemented by: The Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Balamand, Lebanon**

### **Basic facts**

Country: Lebanon

Starting year: 2001

Outreach: approximately 250 per year

Target Population: Illiterate mothers and youth (usually males)

Language of instruction: Arabic

Facilitator/Beneficiary ratio: 1:8

Main Funding: UNESCO, IOCC

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### **Brief Description**

UNILIT is a programme which provides a valuable bridge between the University and the community; between the privileged and the disadvantaged; between young adults and the rest of the community; between young and old, urban and rural, men and women, who do not have access to the world of knowledge.

### **Rationale**

Adult literacy in Lebanon is a major challenge, especially in the rural areas. As is often the case, illiterate men and women living in these areas suffer from poverty and live in an underserved and underdeveloped environment. Frequently, a clear link can be made between illiteracy, poverty, and poor health.

Higher education institutions can contribute to tackling the literacy challenge by developing suitable programmes and projects to serve local communities and participate in their development. University involvement in community life is a pre-requisite to fulfilling its commitment to education and cultural advancement.

### **Objective**

UNILIT aims at providing mothers and young men in need with the opportunity to acquire reading and writing skills through health literacy initiatives.

It is offered as a course at the University of Balamand, where students receive training in adult learning skills and illiteracy eradication through the Adult Learning Programme of the National Committee for Illiteracy Eradication (Ministry of Social Affairs). Under the slogan "from a student to a citizen", the programme aims at teaching the youth enrolled in university how to become responsible citizens, actively participating in the development of their community.

### **Conceptual Model and Methodology**

The UNILIT programme operates through a free one-year course (three consecutive semesters) given by the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Balamand and which is open to all students enrolled at the University of Balamand as well as recent graduates. This practicum is the main component of the illiteracy eradication programme "From a Student to a Citizen" implemented by the Faculty of Health Sciences of the University of Balamand (FHSUOB).

UNILIT students usually meet in class once a week and work in the field during the whole semester. The illiteracy eradication sessions take place in Akkar, 2 hours a day, 3 days a week, for a nine-month period, with volunteers (youth of university level) from Akkar. FHSUOB students are responsible for planning and implementing health behaviour educational interventions on the Akkar site. At the start of each semester, UNILIT students are trained on adult learning skills and illiteracy eradication through the Adult Learning Programme of the National Committee for Illiteracy Eradication in the Ministry of Social Affairs.

### **Innovative features**

The UNILIT programme operates by joining together the efforts of all stakeholders to contribute to building the nation. This is done through local community development interventions including building responsible citizenship, and by providing youth and young adults, irrespective of gender, with equal educational opportunities, which are essential for building a healthier and better society.