

cewas Lebanon Programme

In early 2018, cewas Middle East together with the Rotarian Clubs of Willsau, Baabda, Saida and Tripoli Cosmopolis, launched the cewas Lebanon programme, to support young, motivated entrepreneurs in water, sanitation and waste. The programme, the first water, sanitation and waste focused business development programme in Lebanon, ran from Jan - Dec 2018 and included 3 training modules, individualized coaching, various events with many successes and lessons learned.

Throughout the programme application period from January to March, strong outreach by the cewas team was conducted which included participation in numerous events, conferences, start-up weekends, individual coaching sessions, workshops and informal meetings. In the end, 15 start-up teams were selected to join the cewas Lebanon programme. Key partnerships to facilitate implementation were made with Berytech and Diane Foundation, two active players in the entrepreneurship sector in Lebanon. On March 22nd, the launch of the programme was held with a screening of a documentary of the water issues in Lebanon and a World Water Day Rooftop party for start-ups and WASH professionals. The following three training modules were implemented to support the start-ups in establishing their businesses.

MODULE 1: IDEA DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS MODEL

This module introduced the start-ups to the market and sectors trends in water, sanitation and waste. It helped guide the start-ups through various business models with the help of over 12 external coaches from different sectors in setting up a minimum viable product that would be further developed in Module 2. A group hike was integrated into the last day allowing the teams to develop their action plans the beauty of nature.

MODULE 2: MARKETING AND TESTING

This hands on module helped the start-ups test the prototype and design a marketing mix which they went out and tested on real people and customers. The learning objectives of this module included understanding how to attract customers, prioritizing price, product, place and promotion, as well as a final group dinner to develop the group dynamics.

MODULE 3: FINANCE AND BUSINESS PLAN

This module helped the start-ups develop the building blocks for setting up their financing plans, liquidity planning, develop a strategic vision, and build their business plans. One the final day, 8 of the start-ups pitched to a closed jury for a cash prize of 15,000USD to help jump start their business as well as two fully funded trips to international water related conferences, World Water Week in Stockholm, and AMWAJ in Barcelona.



cewas Lebanon start-ups jumping for joy after Module 1. March 2018, Beirut

At the conclusion of the training modules, individualized coaching period began together with the Berytech and Diane Foundation teams to support the start-ups as they began to develop and grow their businesses. The coaching period lasted from July- November 2018.

The cewas Lebanon programme concluded with the **cewas RoadShow** on November 30th, which was attended by over a hundred representatives of local and international NGOs, businesses, start-up ecosystem actors and partner organisations. This represented not only an important milestone for the cewas Lebanon programme, but also a valuable networking opportunity for the start-ups. The event was opened with speeches by Jamil Mouawad, former district District 2452 Governor, and Lillian Volat, project leader of cewas Middle East. Nine start-ups graduated from the cewas Lebanon programme in 2018, and six of them pitched their innovative solutions live on stage at Beirut Digital District:

Clean2O is an affordable, portable and convenient device that uses both physical and chemical filtration to kill bacteria and viruses, removing dirt and chemical toxins.

CubeX is a decentralized wastewater and solid waste treatment system tailored for rural households and tented settlements.

DeCentra developed an innovative financial model, through which it facilitates access to financing to for municipalities and commercial industries to install Decentralized Wastewater Treatment Systems.

Green Track tackles waste management issues in Lebanon through recycling and awareness raising, particularly by working with unemployed women from conflict ridden Jabal Mohsen.

Plastic Beach works with a custom plastic shredder that fits inside a van, collecting large quantities of plastic waste and turning it into filaments for 3D printing.

Turba recycles organic waste from businesses into a high quality soil amendment.

After a long and thorough deliberation, the jury, which consisted of André Marti (Rotary Willisau), Johannes Heeb (cewas), Tamara Zakharia (UNICEF), Fadi Naffah (Berytech) and Maya Karkour (EcoConsulting), granted a cash prize of USD 5,000 to **Plastic Beach**. By doing so, they acknowledge the young start-ups hard work in developing an innovative approach to plastic waste management, cleaner water and job creation for refugees over the past year. The Audience Favourite award went to **Turba**. Upon conclusion of the official part, attendees got to visit the start-ups at their booths to learn more about their approaches in a Marketplace setting. Photos can be seen [here](#).

LOOKING AHEAD

While implementing the programme, it was evident that the Lebanese entrepreneurship ecosystem actors welcomed this initiative. At least two actors were inspired to integrate the themes of water and sustainability their own programming in 2019. This is a promising result, as widening the amount of actors putting efforts into delivering entrepreneurship support for environmental challenges in Lebanon is of utmost importance in solving the environmental crisis. Low risk financing for these types of initiatives is very limited, so the opportunity to create a sector specific “angle investor” group, together with the local rotarians and possibly others, is an idea that is under consideration within the cewas team. Another area that could further supported the start-ups is stronger integration and coordination with actors in the WASH sector of Lebanon, particularly the international NGO’s and municipalities. This would have added a stronger support to and integration of the start-ups initiatives into the market. The only challenge with the trainings was the fact that many of the start-ups were not able to have 100% attendance due to other commitments. In the coming programme, it is being considered to have at least one module implemented away from the bustle of Beirut, in a remote location in Lebanon where the starts-up could stay overnight, work in a focused and relaxed environment and create a stronger group feeling and enhance their trust between each other. Hopefully, in the coming years, the community will widen, the start-ups will continue to build their innovative businesses and create employment opportunities, and a greener and more sustainable market will develop in Lebanon.