



## LAU CHAT: Anne Dix

Since 2014, the LAU Health Foundation has received multi-year, multi-million dollar grants from the American Schools and Hospitals Abroad (ASHA) to purchase life-saving equipment and support vital trauma care for the LAU Medical Center-Rizk Hospital. As an organizational unit within the USAID Bureau of Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA), ASHA administers a worldwide grant program that facilitates the creation of educational learning centers and promotes opportunities in foreign countries through institutions that incorporate America's highest education and medical research standards.

LAU Matters had a chance to interview Anne Dix, Director of the ASHA office at USAID, who oversees the partnership between ASHA and LAU. The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

**1. As the director of the American Schools and Hospitals Abroad office at USAID, can you tell us a bit more about what ASHA does in your own words?**

The purpose of the ASHA program is to support partnerships between organizations founded or sponsored by US Citizens and civil society organizations

overseas. ASHA specifically provides assistance to overseas schools, libraries, and hospitals that showcase American ideas and practices, and that provide concrete and tangible vehicles to stimulate collaboration and mutual understanding between US citizens and citizens of other countries. ASHA partners are working in some of the most difficult environments around the world, and through their work in health and education they bring hope to people in need.

**2. As someone who has spent most of her career working for the United States government in the international development arena, why do you think it is important for the United States government to support schools and hospitals abroad?**

The goal of any good development professional is to eliminate the need for their existence. Schools and hospitals serve a transformational role in civil society, not only because of those they provide services to, but also because these schools and hospitals are investing in the future leaders of their countries. In order to become future leaders, they must have the tools to succeed. ASHA programs aim

to support institutions that, through their actions, are encouraging young people to engage proactively as members of society, be inclusive in their efforts and strive through hard work to build a better future.

**3. In what way do you think the ASHA grant through the LAU Medical Center-Rizk Hospital serves the Lebanese community? Is there any room for improvement?**

ASHA supported LAU's Rizk Hospital to purchase \$1.3 million in trauma care equipment for the Emergency Unit, the Operating Room, the C-Section Delivery Room, the Open Heart Operating Room, and the ICU at the LAU Medical Center-Rizk Hospital. It is also currently supporting the purchase of equipment to help medical professionals improve the quality of care they provide to treat complications at childbirth that impact mothers and infants. ASHA is particularly impressed with the efforts the hospital is making to reach out to underserved and marginalized populations in Lebanon.

The education students receive from the LAU Medical Center-Rizk Hospital not only benefits Lebanon, but also professionals from around the world who



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come to LAU because of the quality of education it offers, from pharmacy, to nursing, to medical care. Together, LAU's Beirut and Byblos campuses provide nearly \$900 million to the Lebanese economy every year. More than \$200 million of this money is through the generation of jobs and employment opportunities for over 9500 people. However, LAU's retention rates have remained fairly stagnant over the past few years. I would like to see these retention rates improve and learn more about the efforts LAU is making to improve these numbers.

#### **4. What are some of the unexpected hurdles with overseeing grants and what are some of the unexpected benefits?**

The ASHA program is based in Washington and many of the places where we work are hard to travel to because of funding and travel restrictions. This means that sometimes we don't receive the full

story of what is happening on the ground in a timely manner, and have to rely on third party reporting and on partners to communicate proactively about issues they encounter before they become large problems.

However, the benefits of the program outweigh the risks. For example, ASHA funding has enabled hospitals to scale up and provide lifesaving treatment to more people with no access to healthcare, either through improved facilities and capacity, or through the provision of diagnostic equipment used to target treatment. Partnerships between American and local healthcare providers have enhanced our knowledge and ability to treat some of the world's most challenging health issues. From an educational perspective, our partners have enabled many young people to dream bigger and to aspire to becoming leaders of change for their countries by offering them learning opportunities they might not have had otherwise. The

relationships these young people are building at the institutions ASHA supports will become the building blocks for future development efforts in their countries.

#### **5. Is there anything else you would like to add?**

The funds ASHA receives come from the American people and are appropriated every year by our Congress and Senate, as they have for the past 60 years in Lebanon. The Lebanese Diaspora plays a critical role as an advocate for the people of Lebanon and the Middle East. Americans recognize the sacrifice and effort the Lebanese people have made historically – and are still making today – to be inclusive, and especially admire the spirit with which they welcome so many refugees in their homes.