

Local Economic Development

Pyrex Glass Blow Project in Tyre

When 21 years old, Racha El-Samra, heard about the pyrex glass blow training that UNDP-ART GOLD Lebanon (AGL) was organizing jointly with the International Association to Save Tyre (IAST) she immediately joined. She said the training was an opportunity to further develop her skills in this field. Racha has been learning glass drawing at IAST since two years. She would one day like to sell her glass work and generate additional income to her current earnings as a kindergarten teacher in south Lebanon. «The difficult economic situation prompts us to hold two or even three jobs at the same time», Racha explains.



«Looking into the history of glass blowing in Lebanon, it was first introduced by the Phoenicians in Tyre city», explains Maha Chalabi, IAST President. «While glass making has lost its presence in Lebanon, there's currently only one family in Sarafand in south Lebanon that is using the bubbled glass-blowing technique, a relatively traditional method compared to the Pyrex one», adds Chalabi

While IAST secured the training venue and trainers, AGL provided the necessary training equipment that has enabled IAST to become the only center in Lebanon offering this type of training throughout the year.

IAST is planning to offer advanced trainings in the future to a chosen number of trainees. «In this way we are giving the trainees an important opportunity to increase their income and providing them with means for a sustainable living», concludes Chalabi.



Of the pyrex glass blow training sessions that commenced on July 2011 and lasted for nearly two months, Racha confirms she did not miss any. During these sessions she learned how to use a pipe to blow glass into different shapes as pears, grapes, flowers, spikes and ducks. «Glass blowing is profitable», says Racha, «the glass that would usually cost few cents is sold nine times as much after it is blown».

AGL has partnered with IAST to conduct the training as part of a project entitled «Pyrex Glass Blowing» that aims to promote and revive the handcraft industry, namely glass blowing, protecting this significant heritage from loss. 20 youth and women have joined this training and enhanced their artisan skills in glass blowing, which will give them an additional source of income.