

From the People, to the **People**

How arcenciel brings everyone together for
inclusion, innovation and impact



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From the People, *to the People*

Forty years of transforming exclusion into participation

Founded in 1985, in the midst of Lebanon's civil war, arcenciel was born from a simple conviction: no one should be excluded because of their disability, poverty, background or beliefs. Five friends chose to answer a divided country with solidarity, inclusion and service to all, without political or religious discrimination.

Forty years on, that conviction has grown into one of Lebanon's leading organisations, working across disability inclusion, rehabilitation and health, employment, youth and education, women's empowerment, the environment, agriculture, eco-tourism and heritage.

From assistance to independence, from beneficiary to contributor

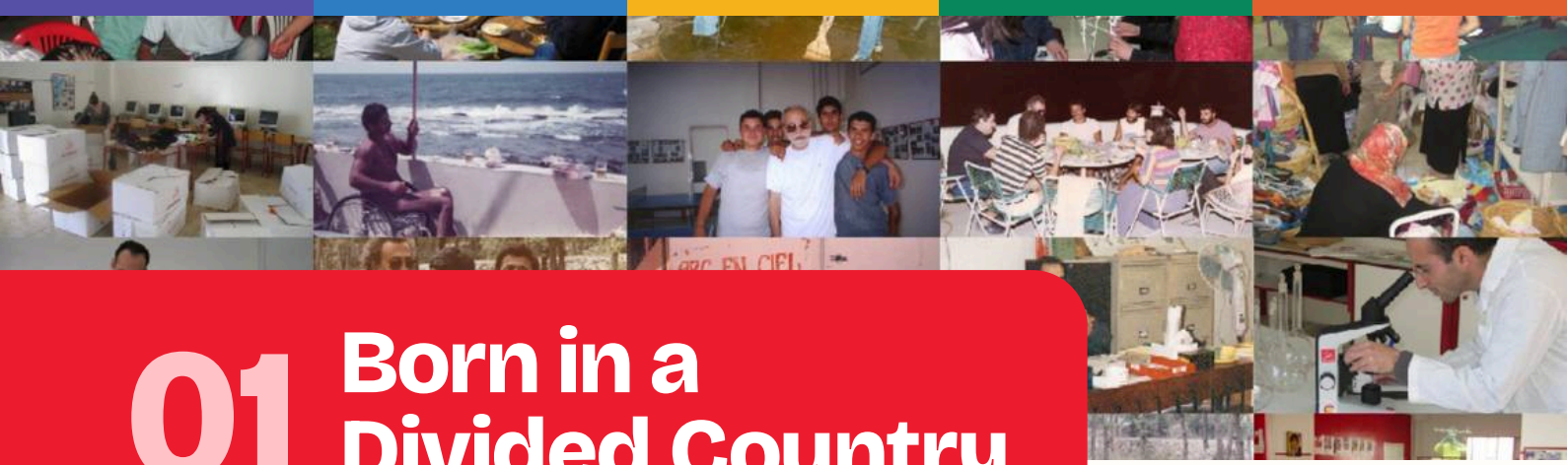
Guided by its founding principle, *Persons in Difficulties serving Persons in Difficulties*, arcenciel sees people facing difficulties not as recipients of aid, but as people with skills, experience and the ability to improve the lives of others. Its aim has never been to create dependency, but to give each person the means to become independent and take part fully in social and economic life.

This approach has translated into concrete results: inclusive employment for thousands of people, accessible health and rehabilitation services, training and work for vulnerable women, social enterprises that combine economic activity with social purpose, and environmental programmes that bring together nature conservation, the circular economy and rural development.

Born in wartime, arcenciel has also built a lasting capacity to respond to crises. When war returned in 2026, it mobilised its centres, teams, workshops, kitchens and social enterprises to stand with displaced and affected families.

Beyond its services, arcenciel carries a vision for society: diversity as a source of strength, solidarity as an everyday practice and inclusion as a driver of sustainable development, rooted in welcoming and service, professionalism, integrity, humility, equity, harmony and leadership through service. Since 1985, it has shown that a fairer society gives everyone not only a place, but the opportunity to contribute.

From the People, to the People: a vision of Lebanon where every colour of the rainbow belongs.



01 Born in a Divided Country

Why, in the middle of a war that divided people, did five friends decide to create something that would bring them together?

A different response to a divided country

In 1985, Lebanon was ten years into a civil war that had torn communities apart. Neighbourhoods were split by demarcation lines, movement between regions was restricted, and a person's religion or political affiliation often decided where they could go and whom they could turn to for help.

The war had also left many people with physical disabilities, and very few services to help them live independently.

At a time when so much was pulling Lebanon apart, five friends came together around a different vision.

Some had already spent years working alongside persons with disabilities and had seen the limits of traditional rehabilitation. People needed the means to move freely, to work, to earn a living, to build relationships and to take their place in society. They imagined an organisation that would answer these needs without ever asking which religion, political group or community a person belonged to.

That organisation became arcenciel.



"Illness, injury and disability do not discriminate. Why should the response?"

pierre issa, co-founder

Why a rainbow?

The name *arcenciel*, French for “rainbow”, was chosen with intention. For the co-founders, its inspiration reaches back to Genesis 9:16, where the rainbow stands for an everlasting covenant between God and every living creature.

For all the founders, the rainbow also reflected the Lebanon they hoped to see: a country where every religion, political affiliation, background and individual would have a place. Its seven colours are different, yet they belong to the same rainbow. At a time when people were being separated by their differences, arcenciel chose a symbol that embraced them. Diversity was not something to erase or to fear, but something to welcome.

A rainbow does not choose who it shines on. Neither should the people who serve others.

That belief would shape every stage of arcenciel's growth: an apolitical, non-confessional organisation, committed to welcoming and supporting people without discrimination.



A principle that crossed the lines

For the founders, serving everyone was never meant to stay a declaration of principle.

During the civil war, when Beirut was cut in two by checkpoints and demarcation lines, arcenciel worked to reach persons with disabilities on every side. One of the co-founders remembers

wheel- chairs being carried through the Mathaf passage, one of the crossing points that divided the city.

Crossing could be difficult and dangerous. But the need for a wheelchair did not belong to one side of the city.

The people waiting for help came first. Their identity and affiliation never decided whether they deserved it.

It was an early expression of what would become arcenciel's way of working: practical solidarity, carried wherever people needed it.

From a small beginning to a lasting institution

arcenciel's early work focused on helping people regain their mobility and independence. Officially accredited by the Ministry of Interior on 21 November 1985, the association took an important step in 1986, when it opened Lebanon's first dedicated repair and assembly unit for wheelchairs and assistive devices. Instead of treating reduced mobility as a limit people simply had to accept, the team repaired, adapted and assembled equipment that helped them take back control of their daily lives.

Over the years, arcenciel identified needs beyond mobility and developed a deeper understanding of the wider challenges facing communities across Lebanon. What began as a small office in Beirut grew into an organisation with 12 centres across the country, working in disability inclusion, rehabilitation and health, youth and education, the environment, and agriculture, eco-tourism and heritage.

The services evolved. The commitment behind them remained.



From the people, to the people

From its earliest years, arcenciel set out to work *with* people, not simply *for* them. Its philosophy, “**Persons in Difficulties serving Persons in Difficulties**”, challenges the idea that someone living with disability, poverty or exclusion can only ever receive help. A person supported today may have the experience, knowledge or skills to help someone else tomorrow.

That conviction shaped arcenciel's workshops, its employment opportunities, its community-based rehabilitation and its social enterprises. It also grew into a broader belief: that essential support should reach people because of their needs and their rights, not through religious affiliation, political connections or personal influence.

For more than forty years, in a society fractured again and again by war, politics, displacement and economic crisis, arcenciel has turned living together into everyday practice: welcoming people equally, removing barriers, opening opportunities and making room for people of every background to take part in the same society.

The arcenciel spirit

Long before they were written down, arcenciel's values could be seen in the way its founders and first teams worked.

Over time, these ways of working became a shared culture, known as **the arcenciel spirit**. It is expressed in seven fundamental constants that still guide how staff and volunteers welcome people, make decisions and work together, connecting the organisation of today with the principles that shaped its beginnings.

OUR SEVEN FUNDAMENTAL CONSTANTS

- | | | |
|-----------|---|---|
| 01 | Spirit of Welcoming and Service
<i>"A smile costs nothing, and can even be heard over the phone."</i> | Everyone who comes to arcenciel deserves to be welcomed, listened to and treated with dignity, even when we cannot meet their need straight away. |
| 02 | Precision and Professionalism
<i>"What matters is not only what we do, but how we do it."</i> | Care and compassion must be matched by rigour and quality. People facing the greatest difficulties deserve the highest standards. |
| 03 | Transparency and Integrity
<i>"Trust is earned and can be lost; it is never simply given."</i> | Trust rests on honesty, responsibility and keeping what we do consistent with what we say. |
| 04 | Humility and Empathy
<i>"The vulnerable before the powerful. The poor before the wealthy. The outsider before the familiar. Others before ourselves."</i> | To serve people well, we first try to understand their reality and listen, without assuming we already know what is best for them. |
| 05 | Respect and Equity
<i>"While each person is unique, all are equal."</i> | Every person shares the same dignity and deserves fair treatment, whatever their abilities, circumstances or background. |
| 06 | Diversity and Harmony
<i>"Difference is a source of strength."</i> | We do not ask people to become alike. We look for ways for them to take part and contribute together. |
| 07 | Team Spirit and Leadership by Service
<i>"Responsibility is a service, not a title."</i> | Leadership means taking responsibility, supporting one another and putting the shared mission before personal recognition. |

« Surtout, surtout, sois indulgent. »

"Above all, above all, be understanding." • Jean Cocteau

OUR SLOGAN THROUGH THE YEARS

One mission, evolving with the needs of society

As arcenciel's work expanded, the slogan reflecting its mission evolved alongside it.

1985 - 1996

With and for all persons with disabilities

1996 - 2009

With and for all persons in difficulties

2009 - 2025

Participate in development

2025 - TODAY

Contributing to development, with and for all persons in difficulties.

Each version marks a stage in arcenciel's growth: from its first commitment to disability inclusion, to a broader understanding of social difficulty, and finally to an approach in which participation and sustainable development are central. Yet the principle underneath has never changed.

“Every person has something to contribute, and everyone deserves the opportunity to do so.”

Forty years after its creation, arcenciel's deepest continuity lies in that belief. It connects its first wheelchair workshop to the many programmes, partnerships and initiatives that followed. **And it is where the next chapter of its story begins.**





02 From Support to Participation

What if the people receiving support could become the ones helping others?

A different understanding of rehabilitation

From the beginning, arcenciel believed that helping someone meant more than providing a service. The real question was what that service would allow the person to do afterwards.

Before arcenciel was formally established, some of its founders were already working with young adults with disabilities in rehabilitation facilities. They saw people in their twenties receiving accommodation, meals and medical care, but with few chances to build independent lives outside those walls.

It raised a question that would shape arcenciel's approach: **what was the purpose of rehabilitation if people remained dependent on others for so much of their everyday lives?**

The answer was to look beyond the disability and consider the person's life as a whole. Could they move around their home? Leave the house on their own? Access healthcare? Find work, earn an income, build relationships and take part in community life? These questions became the foundation of an approach centred on autonomy, rather than dependency.

“

Our goal was to become unnecessary.

The goal was to become unnecessary

arcenciel's original ambition was almost paradoxical. Rather than building an organisation people would depend on indefinitely, the founders wanted to help them become independent enough that, one day, they would no longer need its support.

This shaped the way arcenciel developed its services. Instead of measuring success only by the assistance delivered, it tried to understand what stood between a person and greater independence. Sometimes the answer was a wheelchair. Sometimes it was an adapted home, medical treatment, a job, or simply helping a family recognise what their loved one could already do alone. The response always depended on the person, their circumstances and what they wanted to achieve.

Four dimensions of autonomy

To turn this philosophy into practical services, the founders identified four interconnected dimensions of independence.

01 Mobility & Accessibility

The ability to carry out daily activities, move freely at home and reach the world beyond it. A solution can be as simple as adapting a piece of clothing or rearranging furniture, or as substantial as modifying a home or a vehicle.

02 Health

Access to the medical care, rehabilitation and ongoing support a person needs to stay healthy, manage their condition and live as independently as possible.

03 Economic Autonomy

The chance to develop skills, find meaningful work, earn an income and make financial decisions with greater independence.

04 Social Autonomy

The ability to take part in relationships, family life and the wider community, with the freedom to make one's own choices.

These dimensions were never meant to work separately. A person might have the skills to work but no way to reach the workplace. Someone might receive medical care yet remain isolated from community life. Addressing one need without understanding the others could leave important barriers untouched.

For arcenciel, independence meant looking at the whole person, not simply the difficulty that brought them through the door.

Those who know best

When lived experience becomes a source of support

Some of the most meaningful lessons of arcenciel's early years came from the people who turned to it for help. One of the co-founders recalls an encounter between two men that helped shape what would become arcenciel's peer-to-peer counselling.

J.D. was living with a disability that made everyday activities difficult. He depended heavily on others for basic tasks and came to arcenciel looking for ways to become more independent. Rather than relying only on professional advice, the team introduced him to **H.B.**

H.B. had lost both arms and one eye in a mine explosion during the civil war. He had once received support from arcenciel, but had since built an independent life: he worked full-time at a bank, drove a car and managed much of his daily life himself.



The two men talked for more than two hours. **H.B.** understood concerns that are hard to explain to someone who has never experienced the same barriers. He spoke not only as someone who had overcome difficulties, but as someone who had learned from living with them.

From experience to expertise

Peer support blurred the line between the person giving help and the person receiving it. Professional knowledge remained essential, but lived experience brought something equally valuable: a practical understanding of daily challenges, and of the decisions involved in becoming more independent.

Over time, this principle reached beyond disability. People who had once received support for substance-use difficulties later helped others in similar circumstances, and some became employees, drawing on their own experience in their work.

A person's past difficulties did not have to define what they could offer others.

OUR DEFINING PRINCIPLE

Persons in Difficulties serving Persons in Difficulties

Someone who receives support today may become the person offering it tomorrow. And sometimes, as in the encounter between **H.B.** and **J.D.**, the exchange itself becomes part of the solution.

From beneficiaries to contributors

From its earliest assistive-device workshops, persons with disabilities repaired, adapted and produced the equipment that would help others regain their mobility. Their experience was not a limitation; it was often an advantage in understanding what another wheelchair user needed. The same philosophy shaped arcenciel's employment services, vocational activities and social enterprises.



MARWAN'S STORY

1991 → today

From a ramp at his door to a career that opens doors for others

For years, Marwan was largely confined to his home. As a wheelchair user living on the second floor of a building accessible only by stairs, he depended on others to carry him whenever he needed to leave.

Determined to find a way forward, his mother reached out to several organisations. Marwan also hoped to find work, even from home, so he could feel productive and independent. Their search eventually led them to arcenciel.

After several visits, one of arcenciel's co-founders and the team worked with the local community to find a solution. With

authorization from the municipality and the help of local welders, craftspeople and neighbours, an access ramp was built in 1991. It gave Marwan the freedom to leave his home independently, and he kept using it until he moved out of that home in 2025.

But his journey with arcenciel did not end there. Marwan joined the wheelchair repair workshop, where he was encouraged to develop his skills. He completed training in AutoCAD and Training of Trainers (ToT), eventually becoming a trainer himself. As his abilities grew, he moved into research and development, contributing his expertise to assistive-device solutions.

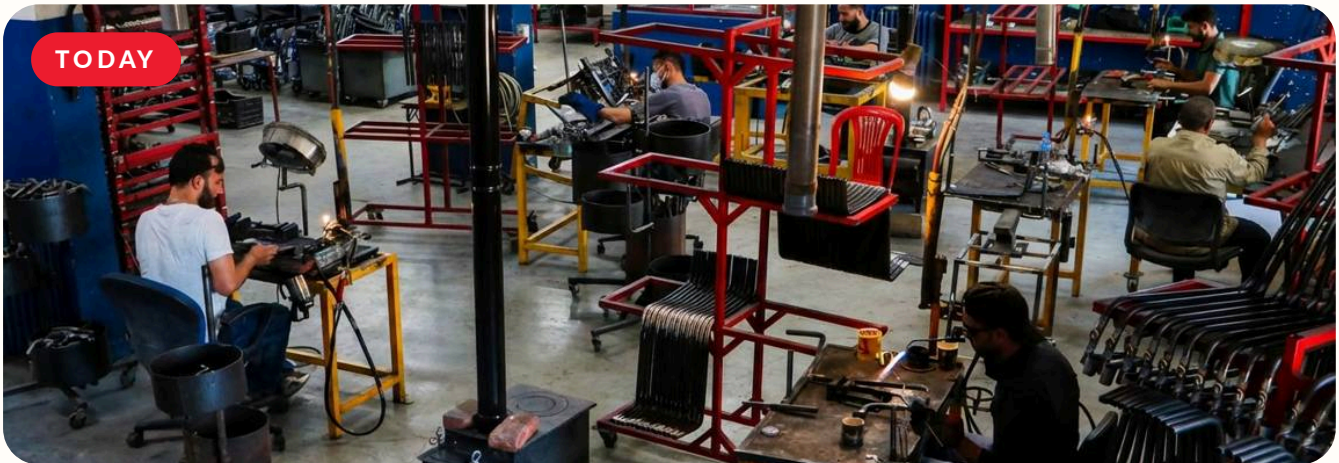
More than three decades later, Marwan is still part of arcenciel. What began with a community coming together to remove a barrier became an opportunity for him to build a career, and to use his own experience to help others gain independence.

The workshops that brought people together

arcenciel's mobility and assistive-device workshops began in Beirut, at Jisr El Wati. In the early years, the team tried to bring wheelchairs and other devices from abroad to serve people across Lebanon. Some arrived broken, and the team had to find ways to repair them. The need was far greater than anything that could be imported, and it became one of the reasons arcenciel set up proper workshops to make devices, and repair them, locally.

Many of the people who came to work there were people the founders had met along the way, including some who had been deeply affected by the civil war. Some had stood on opposing sides of the conflict, divided by politics and by faith. In the workshops, they worked side by side, building and repairing devices for persons with disabilities like themselves.

At a time when the country was divided, the workshop gave them a shared purpose: serving others.



A VOICE FROM THE WORKSHOP

“I have walked side by side with arcenciel since the very first day, and watched it grow. I have no doubt it has an even brighter future ahead.”

Affected by the civil war, Omar has been part of the workshop's story from its earliest days.

Omar El Fawal

Head of Mass Production Workshop, Disability Inclusion Sector

Making participation part of the institution

That spirit grew into a lasting way of working. Today, persons with disabilities produce and adapt assistive devices in the workshops, inclusive employment services help people build skills and find jobs, and social enterprises give people facing exclusion a place in productive work.

A DIFFERENT MEASURE OF SUCCESS

Inclusion is not complete when someone receives support. It becomes more meaningful when that support creates the freedom to participate, make choices and contribute to others.

38%

of employees in 2025 were persons with disabilities and/or facing social difficulties.

3,240+

jobs created for persons with disabilities since 1985

Opening the door to work

In 1994, an Employment Office opened to help persons with disabilities find work through skills training and job matching, and to gain financial autonomy. It later became the Inclusive Employment Unit, which supports job seekers and employers alike, from preparing candidates to helping workplaces welcome them.

2000 • Law 220 RIGHTS & ADVOCACY

A law championed from the ground up

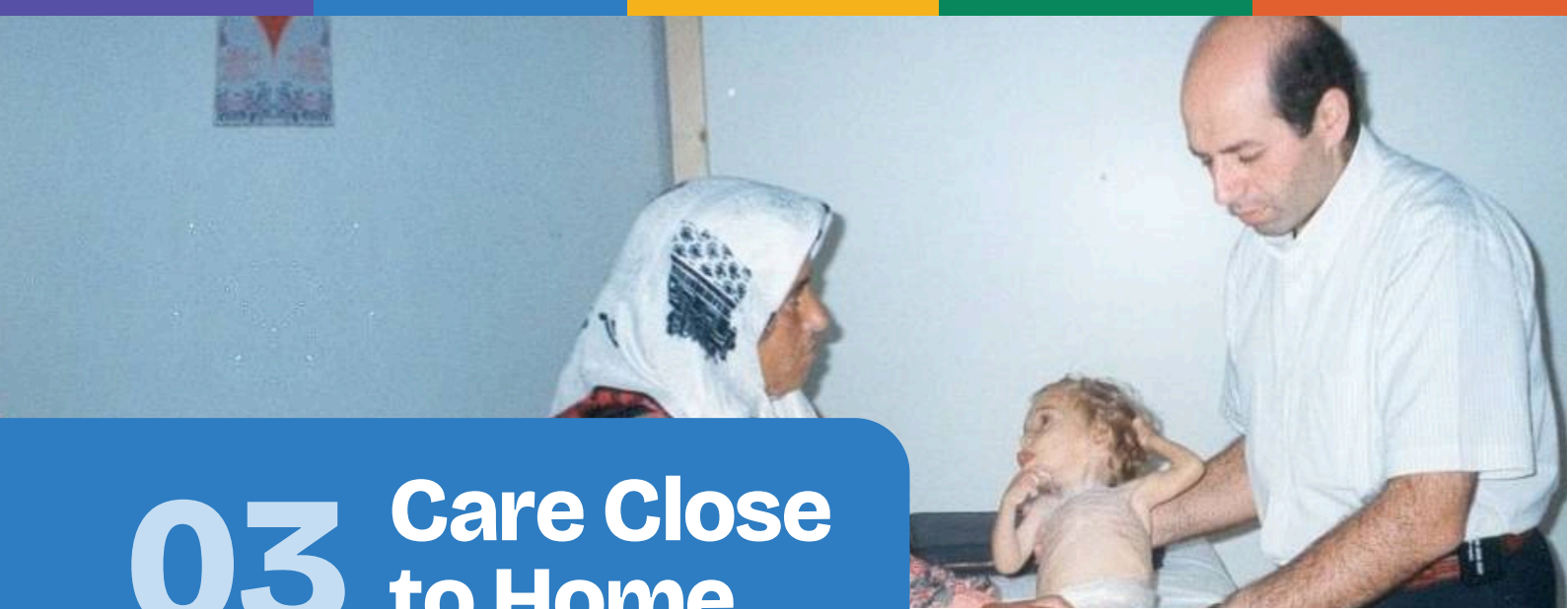
Participation also needed rights. The organisation championed Law 220/2000, playing a central role in advocating for and developing the national Rights and Access programme, launched in 1994 with the Ministry of Social Affairs, that shaped it. Lebanon's landmark law on the rights of persons with disabilities covers assistive devices and rehabilitation services, and requires employers to reserve at least 3% of jobs for persons with disabilities.

Ongoing advocacy

Together with partners and campaigns such as **#ما_تعوقني** (Don't Dis My Ability), the work continues: raising awareness of rights, pushing for inclusion in the labour market and supporting accessible infrastructure across Lebanon.



What began at a workshop bench became a right written into law.



03 Care Close to Home

What does a person need, beyond a wheelchair, to live a full life?

Where it began

By 1987, arcenciel had learned something important from the people it served. A wheelchair could restore mobility, but persons with disabilities also needed medical care, rehabilitation and social support to live full and independent lives.

That year, the first health rehabilitation and medical consultation unit opened at the Jisr El Wati centre in Beirut. It was the beginning of today's Rehabilitation & Health sector, bringing community health, rehabilitation and social services to those who needed them most.

Bringing care into the community

In 1991, arcenciel launched Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) in Beirut. Instead of asking people to travel to distant institutions, rehabilitation, social support and access to services were brought into their own neighbourhoods, with families involved at every step.

Known internationally today as Community-Based Inclusive Development (CBID), the approach became the backbone of every arcenciel centre.

LEBANON'S FIRST

**Community-
Based
Rehabilitation,
1991**

Now known internationally as
Community-Based Inclusive
Development (CBID)

220,000+

people reached with medical
and paramedical support

1985-2025 • CUMULATIVE

Care within everyone's reach

Today, arcenciel offers a full range of health and rehabilitation services. They are provided at a fraction of private-sector prices, and free of charge when needed, so that cost never stands between a person and the care they deserve.



Physiotherapy

Recovery from injury, pain and reduced mobility.



Psychomotor therapy

Movement-based support for coordination, body awareness and emotional regulation.



Occupational therapy

Regaining independence in daily life and at work.



Speech therapy

Support for speech, language, communication and swallowing.



Medical consultations

General and specialist consultations, follow-up and prevention.



Dental services

Dental care and treatment for children and adults.

CARE GIVEN FREELY

Much of this care is possible because doctors, dentists and therapists choose to volunteer their time.

They serve whoever comes through the door, without asking where they come from or what they believe: one person caring for another, simply because they share the same humanity.



Beyond treatment



Medicines and the Social Pharmacy

Alongside care, arcenciel provides medications and medical materials. Through its Social Pharmacy, people donate medicines they no longer need. These are professionally sorted and checked, then passed on, free of charge, to people who need them but cannot afford them.

13,718

medications given to
1,479 people in 2025

The Social Unit: care that comes home

Care does not end at the clinic door. arcenciel's Social Unit visits people in their own homes, to understand their situation, to listen, and to share the weight of what they carry.

From there, the team works with the community and across arcenciel's own services to find the support each family needs: an assistive device, medication, therapy, an adaptation to the home, or simply someone who keeps coming back.

No one should have to carry their difficulties alone.



Mobility & health in one year

2025

4,988

people received 7,172
assistive devices and
patient-support items

400

people benefited from
1,843 repairs to mobility
equipment

85

people received 233 home
and vehicle adaptations

1,059

people received 10,098
therapy sessions

356

people received 598
medical and dental
consultations

647

people received 1,680
wound care services

1,479

people received 13,718
medications

3,291

people received 634,414
incontinence products

Centres across Lebanon

As needs grew, so did the network. Each new centre brought community-based rehabilitation, medical and paramedical care, and assistive devices closer to the families who needed them, far beyond the capital.



Jisr El Wati • Beirut

1987

The first medical consultation unit; relocated in 1997 with community-based rehabilitation and assistive devices.



Halba • Akkar

1996

Community-based rehabilitation, medical care and assistive devices for the North.



Taanayel • Bekaa

1998

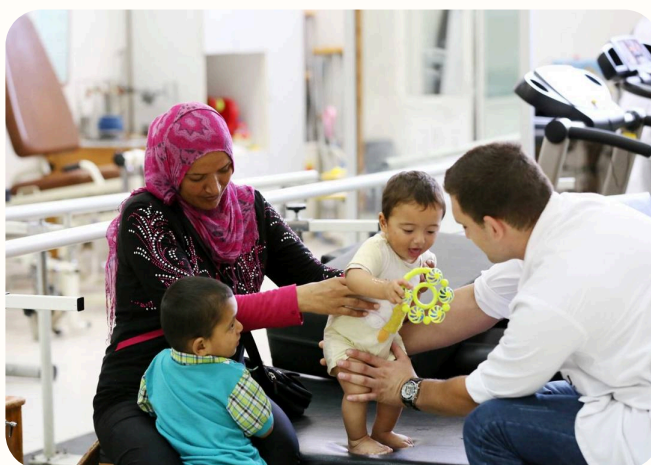
Social support, medical and paramedical services, and assistive devices.



Damour • Mount Lebanon

2003

A community services hub, rebuilt in 2021 after the 2019 fire.



Prevention, rehabilitation and social care, close to home: helping people live with dignity, strength and independence.

04 Growing Up Together



What happens when a whole community decides to look after its own?

How Halba began

T.A. travelled all the way from Akkar, in the far north of Lebanon, to have his electric wheelchair repaired. The repair took time, so the team lent him a temporary wheelchair and promised to bring his own back to Akkar as soon as it was ready.

When the day came, the team went together, carrying extra assistive devices just in case. As soon as they arrived, people from T.A.'s community began to approach them. The need in the North was immense, and the difference these devices made to people's lives was immediate. After listening to each person, the team gave away everything they had brought.

That visit led arcenciel to plant a piece of itself in Halba. The centre opened in 1996 and is still there today. To truly understand the community's needs, the teams lived in the North for a while, sharing people's daily lives, shaping the centre's services around what the community needed, and working alongside everyone so that people could support one another.



A promise to return one wheelchair became a centre that has served the North ever since.

The Rainbow Club

In Halba, the Rainbow Club became a living example of community-based rehabilitation. The local community rallied around persons with disabilities: young people helped blind neighbours in their daily lives, and helped people with tetraplegia learn to swim.

It soon grew into much more. The club became a hub where young people, including those going through difficult times, could spend their free time participating in sports such as swimming, basketball and table tennis, in a safe and supportive environment. Every activity it offered came from listening to what young people asked for.

What began as a way to bring a community together around people in difficulty became a club for everyone: a place where young people could simply enjoy being young, as they should.



FROM HALBA TO THE WHOLE COUNTRY

Connecting young people across Lebanon

The club spread nationwide, reaching Beirut in 1997. arcenciel took young people on trips and brought the branches together through shared activities and basketball competitions, connecting young people from different regions of the country and bringing them closer to one another.



It gave a generation what mattered to them most: the chance to enjoy their youth and experience it together.



Cirquenciel

A stage to learn, grow and belong

Cirquenciel grew out of the same youth clubs. In 2001, after training with Cirque du Monde, the clubs launched Cirquenciel, Lebanon's first social circus school. Its purpose was never simply to put on performances: circus became a way to support young people facing difficult circumstances on their life journey, and to bring young people from different backgrounds together through intercultural dialogue.



Juggling, acrobatics and balance ask young people to trust one another, to practise, to fall and to try again. Some participants went on to become instructors themselves, and others started circus activities of their own.

Lebanon's first

social circus school, founded in 2001

700+

students in classes and open play sessions each year

2014

Intercultural Innovation Award (5th place), UN Alliance of Civilizations & BMW Group



CIRQUENCIEL TODAY

Today, Cirquenciel continues to teach circus classes and to perform at events across Lebanon. Its team also runs psychosocial and fun sessions for children affected by war and for children in refugee communities, giving them a space to play, express themselves and, for a while, simply be children.

Learning together

Every child has a place in the classroom

In 2004, there was no place in the Bekaa where young children with disabilities could learn alongside other children. arcenciel opened one in Taanayel: Lebanon's first inclusive nursery, where children of all abilities grew and learned side by side.

Over the years, that nursery grew into today's specialised classes in Taanayel, giving children with disabilities an education adapted to their needs and, whenever possible, a path towards mainstream school.

In Damour, arcenciel also ran a nursery open to all families, at heavily discounted prices for those who were most vulnerable, so that no child missed out on early care because of what their parents could afford. It closed after the 2019 fire at the Damour centre.



850+ children welcomed into inclusive learning • 2004-2025



Where no place existed for these children, arcenciel made one.

7,800 youth visits a year

04 • GROWING UP TOGETHER

Snoubar Skatepark

Where division gives way to connection

Located in Horsh Beirut, along the former Green Line that divided the city during the Lebanese Civil War, Snoubar Skatepark carries a significance that goes beyond skateboarding. Once a symbol of separation, the area is now home to a space where children and young people from different communities, nationalities and social backgrounds come together through a shared passion.

Established in 2021, Snoubar is Lebanon's first public skatepark. In a country where accessible recreational spaces are scarce, it offers young people a safer alternative to skating on busy streets: a dedicated place where they can practise, learn and build friendships.

Through skateboarding sessions and life-skills activities, arcenciel makes the park more than a recreational facility. It is a place where differences matter less than the experiences young people share, encouraging mutual respect, teamwork and a sense of belonging.

On a line that once separated communities, a new generation is finding common ground.

“ *I come from India, and I have never seen anything like this. This skatepark is special not only because it gives people a place to breathe where there are so few, but because of its snoubar trees. These old pines are like mothers, watching over the park while everyone enjoys it.*

TEJAS FOOTBALL - Sports for Social Impact Trainer





05 Women at the Heart of the Work

Teach a trade, pay for the work, and connect it to a real market.

Women's empowerment at arcenciel grew from four small ateliers into a thread that now runs through its social enterprises, its agriculture work and its emergency response. The approach has stayed the same throughout. Women also lead arcenciel from within.

59%

of managerial positions are held by women

2025

38%

of staff are persons with disabilities or facing social difficulties, including women who have survived abuse

2025

250

women upskilled and financially empowered across arcenciel's programmes

2023

From a gap to a programme

arcenciel's work with women began with a criticism it took to heart. Its early work centred on persons with disabilities, then on youth and the environment, but it had no programme designed for women. Recognising this gap, arcenciel developed a dedicated programme for women, built around four production ateliers.

Rug repair

Restoring and mending carpets and rugs

Cuisine & patisserie

Traditional dishes and pastries

Ceramics

Hand-made ceramics

Sewing

Making and repairing garments and textiles

Each atelier taught a marketable trade, produced goods people would buy, and paid women for their work, so that training led directly to income and autonomy. Between 2014 and 2017, a grant from the Agnes Varis Trust Fund created the **Agnes Varis Women Training Center** in Taanayel to strengthen the role of rural women in the Bekaa, while a Fundación Europamundo project trained and employed vulnerable Bekaa women in rural tourism.

Skills that became enterprises

The skills of the first ateliers live on today in permanent social enterprises, where women are trained, employed and paid, and where their work serves the wider community.

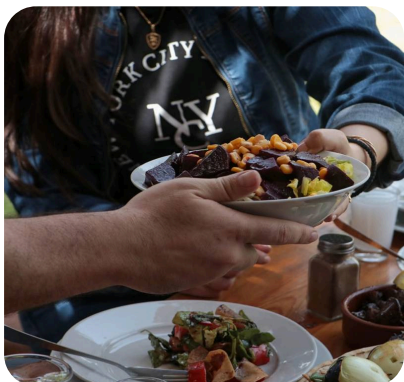


La Boutique

4 BRANCHES

Carrying the sewing tradition into arcenciel's circular-economy work, La Boutique collects donated clothing, resells it at affordable prices and gives clothes free to families in need. Its sewing and upcycling workshops train vulnerable women to create, repair and redesign textiles, and open the way to paid work. Its roots go back to the Boutique Sociale of 2002.

90% of the people working at La Boutique are women



Khan el Maksoud

TAANAYEL

Where the cuisine atelier meets a working restaurant. Opened in 2009 at the Domaine de Taanayel, the kitchen prepares affordable Lebanese dishes from ingredients grown on the Domaine and by nearby farmers, employs vulnerable people, and cooks hot meals for families in need around Taanayel.

36,784 visitors in 2025 **36** events hosted

50% of the main kitchen staff are women



La Cuisine d'arcenciel

JISR EL WATI, BEIRUT

Opened in 2025, arcenciel's newest food social enterprise brings the cuisine and patisserie tradition back to the city where it all began. This inclusive community kitchen creates jobs for persons with disabilities, especially women, and offers catering and weekly menus, including for events of the Office of the First Lady's School of Citizenship programme.

100% of main kitchen staff are women

Paid to cook for their communities

In partnership with UN Women, arcenciel developed an initiative based on a simple principle: empowering women through paid work preparing meals for their communities.

- 2022** A project on women's economic empowerment begins, using cash-for-work to generate household income for vulnerable women.
- 2023** Women join three-month paid apprenticeships cooking hot meals in Taanayel, Chiyah and Sin el Fil, gaining food-safety skills while the meals go to vulnerable families.
- 2024** **Believe in HER Power:** community kitchens and carpentry give women short-term income. When war escalates in September, the project adapts for displaced women in the Bekaa and Beirut.

56,000

meals cooked by women's
kitchens for more than 2,000
people in shelters

2024 WAR RESPONSE

From ateliers to enterprises

Cuisine & pâtisserie	→ Khan el Maksoud kitchen • La Cuisine d'arcenciel • paid community kitchens with UN Women
Sewing	→ Sewing and upcycling at La Boutique
Ceramics	→ L'Atelier ceramics unit: 2,315 pieces in 2025, with 80% of its team persons with disabilities
Rug repair	→ The restoration trade continues through furniture repair at Al Manchara

A trade learned, a fair wage earned, and a place in the market: the path to independence, one woman at a time.

Beit el Mouzareh

The Farmer's House

Established in 2017, Beit el Mouzareh was created to benefit the local community by creating employment for rural women and buying fruit and vegetables directly from farmers. At the Domaine de Taanayel, a marketplace gathers goods from small farmers and producers, including women, and sells them directly to the public: lower prices for buyers, fairer pay for producers. It also trains farmers in quality, sustainable techniques and business skills.



Every jar carries the name of the person behind it

Mona

GRAPE LEAVES

A lighthearted, always-laughing woman, Mona has made mounneh for decades. She began selling her preserves in 2019 to cope with the economic crisis.

Tania

STRAWBERRY JAM

A homemaker from Jbeil El Akoura, a region that lives from agriculture, Tania turned the berries that grow there into home-made jam.



06 Caring for the Earth and Community

Some of arcenciel's most important work is invisible on any single day: waste that no longer endangers a neighbourhood, materials that get a second life, and land that keeps a rural economy alive.

2022 • UNEP

Champions of the Earth

for transformative action in preventing and reversing ecosystem degradation



From a crisis to a system

By 2003, Lebanon's growing waste and environmental crisis demanded urgent action. arcenciel answered with an Environment Programme, starting with what few wanted to handle: potentially infectious hospital waste.

In 2010, building on the Bouchons Roulants bottle-cap project, it began collecting plastic, cans and paper across Lebanon, sorting them in strategically located centres and selling them to recyclers.

In 2006, arcenciel launched its Agriculture, Eco-tourism & Heritage Programme to protect Lebanon's rural heritage, promote sustainable farming and open the door to eco-tourism, starting with the Ecolodge de Taanayel: a guesthouse in the Bekaa built from clay bricks in the region's traditional style, where guests sleep on wool mattresses as their ancestors did and shower with solar-heated water.

Public health, out of sight

In 2003, as Lebanon's waste crisis grew, arcenciel began treating potentially infectious hospital waste. In 2025 alone, it treated 3,761,434 kg, keeping it away from landfills, streets and water.

When the national waste crisis peaked in 2015, arcenciel published a manual for municipalities and still trains them to run their own sorting centres. The aim is to equip local authorities with the skills and resources to manage these activities independently.



87%

of Lebanon's infectious hospital waste, with 100+ partner medical centres.



Giving objects a second life

The Boutique Sociale (2002), La Brocante (2003) and Al Manchara (2022) give donated clothes and furniture a second life at affordable prices. Since 2025, the Zalka Eco-Hub brings them together with the DERE sorting centre.

EACH YEAR • ALL THREE FIGURES ARE ANNUAL

588,034 kg

recyclable waste collected and sorted

70,000

clothing items donated

1,350

furniture items salvaged

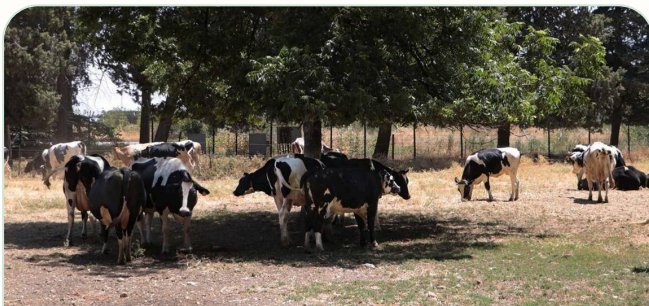


A sorting centre run by a municipality, a hospital whose waste is treated safely, a farmer paid a fair price: each keeps working long after a project ends.

The Domaine de Taanayel

Where land, heritage and community meet

Since 2009, arcenciel has managed the 560-acre Domaine de Taanayel in the Bekaa in partnership with the Jesuit Fathers. The Domaine conserves local biodiversity, keeps a working farm alive and has become a place where families from across Lebanon come to walk, breathe and reconnect with nature. Its forest has been rehabilitated and opened with hiking trails, and its income is reinvested in arcenciel's community programmes.



THE DAIRY

La Laiterie du Couvent de Taanayel unit

The Domaine's dairy herd supplies La Laiterie du Couvent de Taanayel unit, keeping a long local dairy tradition alive. Its dairy products are made without preservatives.



SINCE 2006

Ecolodge de Taanayel

Built from clay bricks in the traditional Bekaa style, the Ecolodge welcomes guests in seven houses, where they sleep on wool mattresses and shower with solar-heated water. A Hostelling International youth hostel, it also opened its doors to families displaced by war.

Al Khan al Maksoud. Next to the Ecolodge, the Domaine's traditional restaurant takes its name from the old caravanserai, where every traveller was welcome to rest. Its kitchen serves home-cooked Lebanese dishes made from produce grown on the Domaine and by nearby farmers.

100,000+

visitors to the Domaine each year

174 tons

of compost produced each year

12 tons

of transformed produce for local farmers sold each year

33%

of Taanayel's energy from its own solar panels

Taanayel Ecolodge

A village where everyone belongs



In traditional Lebanese villages, families often lived in neighbourhoods shaped by their religious and cultural backgrounds. As children grew up and started families of their own, their parents would build new rooms or homes beside theirs, and each neighbourhood grew across generations.

When arcenciel built the Taanayel Ecolodge, it drew on this familiar village structure, but with a different vision: **what if the different neighbourhoods of Lebanon could come together in one village?** The Ecolodge was designed to reflect the diversity of Lebanese society, bringing together traditional houses with familiar names.



Abou George



Em Nicola



Hussein



Abou Omar



Assaf



Abou Sara



Abou Sara

Two rooms are named **Abou Sara**, challenging the old convention of naming fathers after their sons, and honouring families with daughters.

Instead of recreating the divisions that have historically separated communities, arcenciel brought these identities together in one shared space, where every name, tradition and background has a place. More than a place to stay, the Ecolodge offers a small reflection of the Lebanon arcenciel believes in: a country where people can keep their identities, celebrate their differences and still belong to the same community.



At Taanayel Ecolodge, the different neighbourhoods of Lebanon come together as one village.



07 When crisis returns

arcenciel was born during a war and has never had the luxury of working only in peacetime. When war returned to Lebanon in March 2026, it did not build an emergency operation from nothing. It mobilised the services, expertise and networks developed over forty years to respond to the emergency.

A pattern, not an exception

arcenciel was founded in the middle of the civil war, and it has stood with people through every crisis since: the wars of 1993, 1996, 2006, 2024 and 2026, the aftermath of the Beirut port explosion in 2020, and the many emergencies in between. After the 2020 blast, teams collected and sorted shattered glass for recycling at a new facility in Karantina, repaired damaged homes with partners, refurbished broken furniture, distributed wheelchairs and crutches, and ran art and sport programmes to help young people cope with trauma. Each time, the response drew on the same foundations: centres already present in the regions, teams who knew the families, and workshops, kitchens and shops that could change their purpose overnight.

1985 • Civil war

1993

1996

2006

2020 • Port explosion

2024

2026

181,000+

services delivered

20,000+

displaced and war-affected people
directly reached

What already existed, and what it became

1 March – 31 August 2026

Cuisine d'arcenciel

an inclusive social kitchen opened in 2025

→ **30,000** hot meals for displaced families and people in shelters

La Boutique

second-hand clothing with a sewing workshop

→ **20,000** clothing items, plus bedsheets and pillows sewn for families

Assistive-device workshops

running since 1986

→ **854** assistive devices for people who fled without their equipment

Rehabilitation teams

in arcenciel's centres

→ **1,565** therapy sessions, so recovery did not stop

Cirquenciel

Lebanon's first social circus school

→ **1,254** children reached with play and expression in shelters

Ecolodge de Taanayel

an eco-tourism lodge

→ **Shelter** temporary accommodation for displaced families

Listening first

Before deciding what to deliver, arcenciel's social teams asked. Families reported three needs on average, led by medicines, assistive devices, adult diapers, clothing and bedding. Of nearly 2,000 diaper requests, 61% were for adults, a need that rarely appears on a relief list.

Listening also changed the response. Seeing women recovering from surgery sleeping on shelter floors, arcenciel extended bed provision to pregnant women and post-surgical patients.

3,000+

household needs assessments

61%

of assessed households included a person with a disability

55%

were internally displaced





08 Working Together, Reaching Further

arcenciel has rarely worked alone. Its most lasting results came from partnerships in which each organisation brought what it did best, and from sharing what it learned with others facing the same problems.

Knowledge shared beyond Lebanon

TECHNICAL TRAINING • TÜRKIYE, NORTH MACEDONIA, SRI LANKA, EGYPT

With Handicap International, arcenciel trained a Turkish NGO in device repair and designed a production unit modelled on its Jisr El Wati workshop. Technicians from North Macedonia and Sri Lanka learned the full process in Beirut.

PROGRAMMES • SYRIA, JORDAN, EGYPT

With Spanish AECID funding through FPSC and local partners in each country, arcenciel delivered community-based rehabilitation and capacity building, and supported device distribution and repair.

PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEMS • SYRIA

With AECID through AIDA and the Syrian Environment Association, arcenciel trained hospital staff in medical waste management and supported a national strategy on infectious waste.

DIRECT SUPPORT • ETHIOPIA, ERITREA

Three field missions provided custom seating for children with cerebral palsy at an orphanage in Ethiopia; wheelchairs were built and delivered for Eritrea.

TOGETHER, FOR FORTY YEARS

Throughout forty years, arcenciel has worked with partners and received support from all around the world. To date, it has implemented 358 projects, none of which would have been possible without everyone who believed in its mission. Behind every project are people working side by side, understanding one another and the needs of those around them, and acting together as a community without limits. In a country that has known years of conflict born of its divisions, this offers a glimpse of the Lebanon that so many aspire to build.

A united Lebanon has to start somewhere. What better place than arcenciel, where everyone stands under the same rainbow, whatever their colour?



AND THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

The Work That *Continues*

Forty years ago, five friends answered a war with a wheelchair workshop. Since then, arcenciel has learned that inclusion is not something given to people, but something built with them: at a workbench, in a classroom, a kitchen, a skatepark or a shelter. Lebanon has changed many times since 1985. The need for a place where everyone belongs has not.

Listen first

Every programme began with a need someone took the time to hear.

Build to last

Workshops, centres and systems that keep working long after a project ends.

Open the door to everyone

Every colour of the rainbow, no one turned away.

Stay

Through every war and every crisis, the doors remained open.

arcenciel will keep building it, from the people, to the people.