



Electricité de Zahlé: A promising pattern of decentralization in the energy sector



Founded in the beginnings of the 1920s, Electricité de Zahlé (EDZ) "ISO 9001 certified" is a private electric power utility based in Zahle, Beqaa, a company committed to safety and better environment, trusted from customers and motivated by the skills, creativity and spirit of its employees.

Following international standards for quality and performance, EDZ operates, develops and maintains electrical networks and electricity services to around 53,000 subscribers in the city of Zahle, and 15 neighboring villages covering an area of 250 km² in central Bekaa. EDZ provides a 24/7 repair and trouble call center ensuring exceptional service reliability, and meeting customers growing needs by providing quality products, optimal services and quick response through implementing cutting edge technological improvements. As a matter of fact, starting from the late nineties, and guided by a team of dedicated administrators, engineers and technicians, EDZ has implemented advanced technologies (such as Geographic Information System "GIS", Network Modeling, Network Remote Monitoring and Fault Detection, GPS Fleet Management, Automatic Meter Reading "AMR", and Prepayment Energy Metering) resulting in a very high efficient network of 100% bill collection rate and only 5% of total overall losses. These figures way exceed any achievement in similar utilities in Lebanon and the surrounding countries.

SAFETY MEASURES

A 24/24 operation and maintenance work schedules are carried out entirely by EDZ teams, whom are equipped with all necessary testing and personnel security tools in compliance with international standards. EDZ engineers and field services personnel are trained for emergency response under the supervision of the Lebanese Red Cross and the Lebanese Civil Defense firefighting brigades. EDZ has also brought in specialized European technical experts to supervise and consult on personnel safety during electrical installations.

In this regards, EDZ has distributed to all its customers, publications related to energy savings and safety precautions from electric shocks and hazards.

POWER GENERATION PROJECT

EDZ has been the holder of the concession for the production and distribution of electricity in central Bekaa since 1923. Its production was reduced as a result of EDL's overcapacity of production in the late 1960's and then completely stopped during the war. In light of the deteriorating situation of energy supply with shortages reaching up to 18h daily, today, not only has EDL proven its inability to cope with the growing market demand, but also EDL's supply to EDZ stagnates below 200GWh/year, whereas fulfilling the customer's base demand 24h/day requires an estimated 360GWh/year (let alone the expected growth in demand coming from the development of industrial/commercial customers).

In order to help achieve competent economy and industry, EDZ is presently in the process of building a power production plant that will supply continuous energy 24/24. The project that has been long waited for and will be built up to the latest technologies in accordance with the most constraining requirements of environmental standards, ensuring 24/364 energy supply with guaranteed quality. The project will allow the development and growth of the economy in a rural area, creating jobs and bringing in investments. There will be one energy bill which is around 35% to 40% cheaper than what people pay presently, and the electricity bill cost on the industry and agricultural usages will be reduced, thus providing better incentives to compete with foreign products. In addition, it will provide income to the Lebanese treasury through collecting VAT and taxes and other official charges. On the other hand, such a project will reduce the pollution generated from the scattered generators and make streets and building facades look better by removing all suspended electrical wires installed by the generators owners. Finally, this project aims towards de-centralization of the energy sector where each area or community has its own generation and distribution facilities for better bill collection and reduction in energy losses. ●