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DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT



Republic of Lebanon
Ministry of Social Affairs

Assessment for the Development of an Accommodation/Multipurpose Facility in Kfarbnine.

Presentation of the Assessment Results
April 2020

Prepared by: Richard Bteich
Assessment design: Richard Bteich, Pascal Abdallah
Field coordination and organization: Josephine Chaar

UDP_NL is co-funded by the **European Union** and **Germany**. It is implemented by the **Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH** in partnership with the **Ministry of Social Affairs**. The Programme targets mainly youth and women in the North Lebanon Governorate through generating income opportunities, improving employability, rehabilitating and constructing public infrastructure and strengthening community exchange to contribute to social stability.

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Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

درب الجبل اللبناني
Lebanon Mountain Trail

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I. Introduction

Introduction

- ❑ This document presents the main results of a preliminary assessment for the development of an accommodation/ multipurpose community facility in the village of Kfarbnine, conducted by LMTA with the financial support of GIZ.
- ❑ The purpose of the assessment is to:
 - ✓ Identify the need for a visitors' accommodation and community multipurpose facility in the village of Kfarbnine in Danniye district (Caza)
 - ✓ Identify a model/concept for the facility
- ❑ The choice of Kfarbnine as a location for the facility is based on a pledge by the Danniye Union of Municipalities and the municipality of Kfarbnine to dedicate a land owned by the latter for establishing the facility
- ❑ The assessment falls within the framework of a multiple activity project of LMTA financed by GIZ which goal is to contribute to improving and promoting the LMT and sustainable tourism in Danniye and to foster local ownership and economic opportunities for local people

II. Methodology

Key Assumptions

The design of the assessment took into consideration the following assumptions derived from the initial design of the project:

- ❑ Kfarbnine and the surrounding villages and towns have no accommodation facilities that cater to the needs of visitors and hikers
- ❑ LMTA looks at the facility project from a rural responsible tourism angle: eco-sustainable model, an enterprise with a social impact benefiting the local economy, a project that supports conservation and protection of local resources and heritage, a project with minimal impact on the environment
- ❑ GIZ is ready to finance the capital cost of the facility (development, building and equipment)
- ❑ The Municipality of Kfarbnine is ready to allocate up to 10.000 sq. m land for the project
- ❑ Union of Danniyeh Municipalities is the main local partner in the project

Objectives and Methods

Objectives

- ❑ Identify the need for a visitors' accommodation and community multipurpose facility in the village of Kfarbnine in Danniyeh Caza
- ❑ Identify a model/concept for the facility (overall concept: identity, services offered, size, organization, governance and management)

Methods

The following methods were used to carry out the assessment:

- ❑ Two (2) Focus Groups Discussions
 - ✓ One (1) focus group with community members representing diverse Community segments and sectors from different villages and towns of Danniyeh
 - ✓ One (1) focus group with youth from Kfarbnine and surroundings
- ❑ Six (6) key informant interviews with key stakeholders
- ❑ Benchmarking of three (3) rural facilities offering tourist accommodation and F&B services

Identifying a model/concept for the facility

Concept/model segments to be identified

Key questions to be answered by the research

KEY FEATURES & UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION

- What are the main characteristics and components of the facility?
- What is distinguished in what the facility offers and what is the promise for its users?

SERVICES & Products

- What services and products should the facility provide for its users?

TARGET MARKET

- Who are the service users of the facility?

SUPPORTIVE KEY ATTRACTIONS

- What are the magnet local natural resources and heritage that help increase facility users number?

SOCIAL & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- What should the impact of the facility be on the local community: how could the facility contribute to local development (local economy, local tourism, environment protection and conservation)?

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

- How should the facility be governed organized and managed?

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

- What are the revenue streams that help guarantee profitability and viability of the facility?

III. Findings of assessment

Community Focus Group and Key Informant Interviews: Questions

The same questions were used for the community focus group discussion and the key informant interviews. Questions are designed to obtain information from the participants along the following axes:

- ❑ Local perception of tourism and visitors
- ❑ Visitors/tourists profile (where they are from, groups, families etc..)
- ❑ Tourists needs (in terms of services and infrastructure)
- ❑ Key attractions for visitors in the area
- ❑ Locals' needs in terms of nature-related recreational activities
- ❑ Expected impact of facility on local community (link to local needs, socioeconomic impact, environmental impact)
- ❑ Concept/model, identity, management and operation of the facility

The questions aimed as well at identifying along the answers of participants, the challenges, risks and opportunities for the facility

Community Focus Group and Key Informant Interviews: Questions (cont'd)

List of Questions

1. How do the local community look at the hiker or the tourist, what does she/he represent for them? And what do they expect from the visitor?
2. Who are the tourists/visitors that come to the area: where do they come from (region of Lebanon, country...), their age, kind of groups (families, friends, schools..)
3. What do the tourists do in the area (activities and interests) and in what season of the year?
4. Are there places of accommodation for tourists if they want to stay overnight (where, how many, what kind of facility)?
5. Are there places/restaurants where the visitors could eat in the area?
6. Do you think they would stay to sleep if a clean, reliable and reasonably priced B&B is available? Why?
7. Do locals make any tourism in their region? What, where?

Community Focus Group and Key Informant Interviews: Questions (cont'd)

List of Questions (cont'd)

In case an accommodation/multipurpose facility is to be built in Kfarbebnine:

8. What kind of services should such facility provide for visitors/tourists ? Why?
9. What kind of services for local community (other than services for visitors/tourists) should such facility provide? Why and for who?
10. How could the facility respond/be related to to nature and environment activities (hiking, exploration, prevention, awareness etc..). With and for whom?
11. What kind of structure should it be? Youth Hostel? B &B? Mixed? Should there be a conference and meeting facilities? Why?
12. Who should manage/run the facility?

Community Focus Group and Key Informant Interviews:

List of focus group participants

Date and time: Feb. 28, 2020 4:00 pm -6:00 pm, Place: Danniyeh Union of Municipalities

Participant	Gender	Age	Village	Organization/occupation
Ahmad Latifeh	M	50	Assoun	Sustainable Development Association
Oueissi Abdel Kader	M	39	Assoun	Sustainable Development Association
Kaled El Sayyed	M	46	Kfarbnine	Environment activist- Teacher
Noha Saade	F	38	Kfarbnine	Scientific club- environment activist- teacher
Munzer El Sayyed	M	42	Kfarbnine	Environment activist- Beekeeper
Abdel Wahab El Sayyed	M	46	Kfarbnine	President of Kfarbnine Development Association
Mahmud Ibrahim	M	30	Kfarbnine	Employee at Kfarbnine municipality
Mirna Chahine	F	45	Znoub	Agricultural engineer and environmental consultant- private sector
Sandra Aoun	F	30	Syr El Danniyeh	Admin assistant, Danniyeh Union of Municipalities
Amani El Sheikh	F	32	Syr El Danniyeh	Admin, Danniyeh Union of Municipalities
Hamza Mustafa	M	28	Al Qmamine	Social activist
Mustafa Moussa	M	35	Bqaasefrine	Director of sports club
Mohammad Shawk	M	43	Bqarsouna	Ministry of agriculture, president of Forrest Center in Syr El Danniyeh
Omar Kanj	M	39	Bqaasefrine	President of Sports club
Daoud Daoud	M	36	Hakl El Azime	Agricultural engineer
Mohammad Taleb	M	38	Al Qmamine	Azzouhour social association, Lawyer, owner of guesthouse

Community Focus Group and Key Informant Interviews:

List of interviewees

Interviewee	Notes on interview
Mohamad Tout, Injaz, Darb W Dar initiative & Samar Dani, executive director of Injaz	26/2/2020 at Injaz office in Bieurt
Omar Hassoun, Group leader of Danniyeh Trail hiking club	26/2/2020 at Richard Bteich office in Beirut
Abdleh Wahab El Sayyed, President of Kfarbnine Development Association	27/2/2020 at his house in Kfarbnine, 8:30 am
Mohammad Saadiyeh, President of Danniyeh Municipal Union	27/2/2020 at his UoM office, 10:30 am
Ali Sabra, vice-mayor of Bqaasefrine municipality	27/2/2020 at Bqaasefrine municipality, 12:30 pm
Gilbert Mokahaiber, Tour operator and owner of 33 north an alternative tourism agency active in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan Morocco and Turkey	9/3/2020 at Starbucks Broumana, 10:am

Community Focus Group and Key Informant Interviews: Findings

Local perception of tourism and visitors

- ❑ People of Dannieyh are mostly welcoming and are just starting to perceive positively the tourists despite the conservative mentality
- ❑ Local communities are starting to understand the benefits of tourism to the local economy
- ❑ People are making efforts to give positive idea about Dannieyh and reverse the negative label of being a fief for terrorists
- ❑ Dannieyh is starting to get back under the spotlight after a long time of negligence and oblivion
- ❑ People do not have yet the culture of hospitality because they do not really understand what tourism is about and what are the different concepts (visitor, tourist, guesthouse, ecotourism, responsible tourism, etc...). Education in that regard is needed
- ❑ The region is not developed from a tourism standpoint at all, it has no infrastructure and is not properly advertised as destination on the tourism map

Community Focus Group and Key Informant Interviews: Findings

Local perception of tourism and visitors (cont'd)

- ❑ LMT, Hiking activities and nature trails are known to “outsiders” and visitors more than locals
- ❑ The local mentality is not open nor ready to the guesthouse concept where locals host visitors in their house
- ❑ Locals are aware of the beauty of nature in their region but ignore the concepts of conservation and protection of natural resources

Community Focus Group and Key Informant Interviews: Findings

Visitors/Tourists profile

- ❑ Many of the visitors that come to the region are from Tripoli, Qlamoun and Koura
- ❑ The number of hikers in the mountains is increasing but still limited
- ❑ Most of those visiting the area of kfarbnine are hikers and families
- ❑ Some visitors are non-Lebanese and mostly European that come for hiking
- ❑ Danniyeh is a summer residence for families from Qalamoun and Tripoli
- ❑ In recent years more and more people native to Danniyeh are starting to come back from cities to discover their region
- ❑ Visitors comprise hiking amateurs, nature lovers, LMT hikers, and those who visit nature and archeological sites in the region
- ❑ Some schools organize one day visit to archeological and nature sites
- ❑ The majority of visitors, whether groups, families or individuals come for a one-day program/tour and leave (visiting sites, having lunch or a quick bite and leave)

Community Focus Group and Key Informant Interviews: Findings

Visitors activities & Attractions

- ❑ Buying local agri-food products (Mouneh, vegetables, fruits, honey...)
- ❑ Picnic in nature
- ❑ Visiting nature sites (i.e. Zahlan Grotto)
- ❑ Visiting archeological sites
- ❑ Hiking in forest (organized and non-organized hiking activities)
- ❑ Nature enjoyment, escape from busy city life and pollution and moderate summer weather are key drivers for Lebanese people to visit Danniyeh
- ❑ The region has a lot to offer in terms of rural tourism: forests, archeological sites, agriculture, charming geography and nature.
- ❑ Visitors seek traditional local lunch in a restaurant
- ❑ Tourists are attracted to the Juniper Forest in summer and winter alike
- ❑ In winter visitors traffic is very low although very few are starting to discover and enjoy nature in snow season (snowshoeing and ski touring)

Community Focus Group and Key Informant Interviews: Findings

Needed Tourism Infrastructure and Services

- ❑ Reliable good quality accommodations are inexistent in the region. The very few hotels and guesthouses have poor service quality. Visitors wishing to stay do not have a place to sleep. Visits are short, only one day
- ❑ The area is quite remote and roads condition is poor. If a reliable, clean and fairly priced accommodation is existent visitors would stay for one night or more
- ❑ A well-equipped and heated accommodation for winter would attract visitors in snow season
- ❑ Tourists prefer staying in a room with a private bathroom over a shared room and bathroom (as experienced by LMTA and alternative tour operators)
- ❑ In Kfarbine and expanded surroundings there are no restaurants. Visitors drive further to Syr to find place to eat
- ❑ The area lacks local guides with experience and command of foreign languages

Community Focus Group and Key Informant Interviews: Findings

Locals' needs

The needs are related to local tourism and recreation in nature activities of the members of the Danniyeh residents

- ❑ Locals tend to discover their region and tour it as this is less costly for them
- ❑ Picnic and nature enjoyment in high mountains and the forests are widespread among locals
- ❑ Locals like eating in restaurants outside their own villages

Community Focus Group and Key Informant Interviews: Findings

Facility concept

1. Identity and general features

- ❑ Facility should not be big in size as it is not needed and is not viable. A small B&B facility is a most suitable option
- ❑ The facility should by itself be an attraction element for visitors
- ❑ The facility should allow mingling of visitors with locals, many visitors seek such experience
- ❑ It is very important that the facility does not become a place for mass tourism that harms the environment. It should be eco-friendly
- ❑ Facility should be a place for responsible tourism networking between local stakeholders and tour operators and tourism groups (hikers, rural and responsible tourism operators etc...)
- ❑ The facility needs to be distinctive and unique in terms of eco-tourism that offers unique services that are competitive and attractive

Community Focus Group and Key Informant Interviews: Findings

Facility concept (cont'd)

1. Identity and general features (cont'd)

- ❑ The architecture and the overall design is key to success. It has to be attractive
- ❑ This facility should include the locals by making the facility useable for them and caters for their needs. Prices have to be designed to accommodate the locals purchase capacity. This concept allows tourists to mix with locals and makes the experience interesting so that the facility doesn't become an outer space ship. Locals should be service users of the facility as well

Community Focus Group and Key Informant Interviews: Findings

Facility concept (cont'd)

2. Services the facility should offer

- ❑ Bed & Breakfast: room capacity 3 persons with private bathroom, and a max. capacity of 30 persons
- ❑ Restaurant that serves local dishes and traditional food (goat dairy products, shanklish, traditional tannour bred freshly baked, butchery restaurant style where meat is cut and grilled directly for customers, etc...)
- ❑ Conference and multipurpose room for groups retreats and meetings and for community meetings and diverse social and cultural activities
- ❑ A shop to sell local produce (agri-food products)
- ❑ Camping spot if space allows
- ❑ Space for picnic with fire pits and grills
- ❑ Playground for children
- ❑ A space for adventure games: ropes course and climbing installation, etc...

Community Focus Group and Key Informant Interviews: Findings

Facility concept (cont'd)

3. Impact of facility and link to local community

- ❑ The facility should be a hub to promote the surrounding villages as a destination for visitors: map of local shops for mouneh and local products, places to visit etc...
- ❑ The facility should be a hub to promote sustainable tourism in the region
- ❑ If successful, the model can influence mentality of people in the area and vehicle the culture of environmental protection and heritage conservation among locals
- ❑ The facility should become a hub of encounter for local organizations and environmentalists to promote the forest and nature conservation. It could reach out to educational institutions (schools) and organize activities in the forest (hiking and environmental awareness, summer camps, etc...)

Community Focus Group and Key Informant Interviews: Findings

Facility concept (cont'd)

3. Impact of facility and link to local community (cont'd)

- ❑ The facility can be linked with the agriculture in the area through the local agricultural cooperatives to help market farmers products. Attraction events related to agriculture could be developed with the facility (apples festival, peaches festival, pears festival etc...)
- ❑ Facility should be linked to the LMT and the hiking trails in the area
- ❑ The facility should be linked to the reserve-to-be juniper forest
- ❑ Facility can create jobs for locals

Community Focus Group and Key Informant Interviews: Findings

Facility concept (cont'd)

4. Governance and Management of facility

- ❑ If the municipality or the union operate directly the facility, the risk of failure is high (favoritism in employment, lack of expertise..) previous experiences with investment and public projects are not encouraging
- ❑ The municipality should not manage the facility as it will be a target of criticism by political opponents
- ❑ The local residents should manage the facility directly
- ❑ Good management and good marketing are needed for the facility to succeed
- ❑ The operation of the facility should be very strict in terms of environmental impact and the social impact (benefits) on local community

Community Focus Group and Key Informant Interviews: Findings

Facility concept (cont'd)

4. Governance and Management of facility (cont'd)

- ❑ The union and the municipality should give the operation to a private specialized entity from outside the region with conditions to hire only locals based on qualifications. This would guarantee distance from destructive local politics

Youth Focus Group: List of participants

Date and time: March. 11, 2020 4:00 pm -6:00 pm, Place: DanniyeH Union of Municipalities

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Village</i>	<i>Organization/occupation</i>
<i>Mohammad Issa</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>Nemrine</i>	<i>Teacher</i>
<i>Wissam Issa</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Nmerine</i>	
<i>Youssef Khalil</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>Nemrine</i>	<i>Environment activist- Teacher</i>
<i>Omar Issa</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>Nemrine</i>	<i>Scientific club- environment activist- teacher</i>
<i>Kassem Bou Kassem</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>Kfarbnine</i>	<i>Student</i>
<i>Moussa Zakkour</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>Kfarbnine</i>	<i>Teacher</i>
<i>Hareth Abdel Wahab</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Kfarbnine</i>	<i>Student</i>
<i>Muaz El Sayyed</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>Kfarbnine</i>	<i>Student</i>
<i>Fattoum Haidar</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Kfarbnine</i>	<i>Teacher</i>
<i>Latifa Saade</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>Kfarbnine</i>	<i>Teacher</i>
<i>Masaab Reslan</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>Beit El Faqs</i>	<i>Social activist</i>
<i>Doaa Alwan</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>Qorsaita</i>	<i>Student</i>
<i>Najlaa Darwich</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>Qorsaita</i>	<i>Student</i>
<i>Faten Kaddour</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>Qorsaita</i>	<i>Student</i>
<i>Wassim Ousman</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>Beit El Faqs</i>	<i>Agricultural engineer</i>
<i>Hamed Ammar</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>Beit El faqs</i>	

Youth Focus Group: Questions

The questions for the youth focus group discussion were designed to obtain information from the participants along the following axes:

- ❑ Local young people's perception of tourism and visitors
- ❑ Visitors/tourists profile (where they are from, groups, families etc..)
- ❑ Tourists needs (in terms of services and infrastructure)
- ❑ Key attractions for visitors in the area
- ❑ Needs of local youth in terms culture, sports, leisure, nature-related activities
- ❑ Link between facility and local young people's needs
- ❑ Concept/model, management and operation of the facility

The questions aimed as well at identifying along the answers of participants the challenges, risks and opportunities for the facility

Youth Focus Group: Questions (cont'd)

List of Questions

1. Who are the tourists/visitors that come to the area: where do they come from (region of Lebanon, country...), their age, kind of groups (families, friends, schools)
2. What do the tourists do in the area (activities and interests) and in what season of the year?
3. Are there places/restaurants where the visitors could eat in the area?
4. Are there accommodations for visitors? What type and where?
5. How do you and other young people spend your free time? What are the leisure activities you do?
6. Do you and other young people do tourism in your region? What, where?

Youth Focus Group: Questions (cont'd)

List of Questions (cont'd)

In case an accommodation/multipurpose facility is to be built in Kfarbebnine:

7. What kind of services should such facility provide for visitors/tourists ? Why?
8. What kind of services for local community (other than services for visitors/tourists) should such facility provide? Why and for who?
9. What kind of services would you like the facility to provide for you and other young people?
10. How could the facility respond/be related to nature and environment activities (hiking, exploration, prevention, awareness etc..).?
11. Who should manage/run the facility?

Youth Focus Group: Findings

How do young people use their free time

- ❑ Reading
- ❑ Working in agriculture
- ❑ Watching football games
- ❑ Watching movies
- ❑ Gathering in friend's place for chatting
- ❑ Spending evening in nature
- ❑ Gathering in public place
- ❑ Young people rarely go outside the region for tourism. They do what is available locally as it is affordable to them

Youth Focus Group: Findings

Perception of tourism and tourists

- ❑ The region is not promoted. Little people in Lebanon know about it
- ❑ The region is quite remote
- ❑ The region is very attractive for rural tourism and has a lot to offer but there are no clear organized activities and services offered to tourists. Tourism is not developed
- ❑ Local identity and heritage should be preserved
- ❑ Nature and heritage are the main assets for tourism development and sustainability in our region. They should be protected and preserved as key to tourism development and sustainability
- ❑ Mass tourism is a threat to local identity and heritage. It can make the region look like any other city or mainstream place
- ❑ Locals are welcoming and generous and like to have visitors and tourists

Youth Focus Group: Findings

Visitors/tourists Profile

- ❑ The largest number of visitors are the mountain hikers
- ❑ Visitors come only in summer.
- ❑ In winter the number of visitors is limited and they are attracted by snow
- ❑ Many of the visitors come to the region upon invitation from local people they know
- ❑ Many tourists come from Tripoli and surroundings

Youth Focus Group: Findings

Visitors activities & attractions

- ❑ Visitors seek beautiful nature and clean air (forests, water springs, mountain landscapes...)
- ❑ The Juniper forest is attractive to tourists
- ❑ Visitors look for local fresh agri-food products and produce to buy. The region has a large variety of agricultural products
- ❑ Tourists seek clean nature away from city pollution
- ❑ Tourists visit archeological sites in the region
- ❑ Tourists seek rural experience including cuisine and traditional lifestyle
- ❑ The area has diverse touristic attractions such as highest bridge in the middle east, Qornet Al Sawda mountain peak, Sfireh castle, caves and rock forests in Kfarbnine, juniper forest. Etc...

Youth Focus Group: Findings

Needed Tourism Infrastructure and Services

- ❑ Create a tourism info center
- ❑ There is a shortage in tourism services mostly restaurants and B&B
- ❑ The only restaurant is the one next to Succar spring, it opens only two months in summer and attracts a lot of tourists. Tourists go to Syr for eating in a restaurant
- ❑ There is a need to an accommodation facility to keep people in the area for more than one day. Many guests like to sleep overnight in Danniyeh then continue their trip next day to Hermel or Akkar but there is no such facility in the area. Tourists go to Syr for accommodation
- ❑ Winter activities are needed (snowshoeing, touring ski...)
- ❑ Road signage is needed
- ❑ Trained local guides are needed

Youth Focus Group: Findings

Locals' and youth needs

The needs are related to local tourism and leisure activities activities of the residents at large and the younger generation specifically

- ❑ Locals' look for nature enjoyment in the high mountains and forests
- ❑ Locals like picnic a lot and there are no places equipped and organized for that
- ❑ As young people we wish to have nature and sports activities facilities and services such as back horse riding, football, ski touring, nature adventure (caving, mountain climbing,...)
- ❑ Young people would enjoy nature exploration activities (fauna and flora) in their region

Youth Focus Group: Findings

Facility Concept

1. Identity and general features

- ❑ The facility should blend with the nature and the landscape
- ❑ The facility has to respect the environment and be eco-friendly
- ❑ Facility should provide calm space and nature enjoyment
- ❑ Facility should have a rural atmosphere
- ❑ Facility should offer a unique local rural experience for visitors

Youth Focus Group: Findings

Facility Concept (cont'd)

2. Services the facility should offer

- Bed and Breakfast
- Restaurant serving local and traditional cuisine
- Ropes course and other climbing activities
- Picnic spot with grilling facilities
- Bike renting and biking tours
- Facility should provide internet connection
- A camping spot on the facility if space allows
- A children playground

Youth Focus Group: Findings

Facility Concept (cont'd)

3. Services the facility should offer (cont'd)

- ❑ Selling point for local products (mouneh and agri-food products)
- ❑ A room for groups meeting and diverse activities
- ❑ A mini basketball
- ❑ Minifootball
- ❑ Swimming pool
- ❑ Small library and spots for calm reading
- ❑ Gathering space for watching movies

Youth Focus Group: Findings

Facility Concept (cont'd)

4. Impact of facility and link to community and youth

- ❑ The facility should contribute in promoting responsible tourism in the region. It should be a hub for providing tourism information about the region for visitors
- ❑ Facility should provide a common gathering space for young people
- ❑ Facility can promote environmental awareness and environment related activities with local communities
- ❑ Facility should help promote rural agriculture and local heritage through thematic and cultural events related to local heritage and agriculture (example: pears festivals)
- ❑ Facility can contribute in creating job opportunities for young people
- ❑ The facility could be a hub for environmental organizations and activists

Learnings from benchmarking- Methodology

Objectives

The objective of the benchmarking is to help identify a suitable concept model for the facility by examining other facilities. Three facilities were examined: 1) Tawlet & Beit Ammiq, 2) Taanayel ecolodge and Restaurant and 3) ARZ Ehmej.

The selection of the three facilities is based on the following criteria:

The facility has to:

- ❑ Be an eco-friendly B&B, F&B and tourism activities service provider
- ❑ Be located in rural area
- ❑ Be featured as a business with social and environmental impact or is a local development initiative
- ❑ Be owned by an NGO, or a non-profit organization or a municipality

Youth Focus Group: Findings

Facility Concept (cont'd)

5. Governance and management of facility

- ❑ Facility should be operated by a specialized private entity
- ❑ Facility should be managed by local young people with experience
- ❑ Management and operation of the facility should be independent from municipalities and local politics
- ❑ LMTA should help in managing and promoting the facility

Learnings from benchmarking- Methodology

Info gathering methods

The gathering of the benchmarking information used the following methods:

1. Meeting with key people in each of the benchmarked facilities:
 - Tawlet & Beit Ammiq: Mr. Nizar Hani, General Manager of Shouf Biosphere reserve (co-owner party of the facility)
 - Tannayel ecolodge and restaurant: Mr. Jad Abu Aarrage, leader of the ecolodge project at arc en ciel association (foundation phase in 2006), Mr. Johnny Hayek responsible of Food & Beverage at arc ciel central administration (owner organization of the facility)
 - Arz Ehmej: Ms. Imane Khalife, Manager of the facility, Mr. Charles Khalife president of Ehmej Development Association (managing organization of the facility)
2. Desk review: internal documents, public documents and websites

Learnings from benchmarking- Methodology

Benchmarking template is split in 9 sections per organization. Each section clearly links to one of the concept/model segments of the facility

Description

1	General information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General information of the facility: Year of establishment, location, number of employees, property size
2	Key features and unique value proposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Different components of the facility and distinctiveness of its identity
3	Service/product offering	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Types and description of services and products offered by the facility
4	Target market	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Target segments and service users of the facility (e.g. families, hikers, etc.)• Target geographies of the facility (e.g. Lebanese, Europeans, Arabs, etc.)
5	Supportive key attractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The most important attractions in the geography of the facility that attract tourists/visitors
6	Social & environmental impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The social and economic contribution of the facility to local community and its input in terms of environment and heritage conservation and protection
7	Structure, governance & management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facility structure and organization: types of partnerships formed, governance system, management structure and capacity
8	Financial sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Type of revenue streams that secure the sustainability of the facility• Price list• Profitability
9	Evolution journey	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How the facility changed and evolved over time and key milestones achieved

Learnings from benchmarking- Tawlet & Beit Ammiq

General information

Year of establishment

2012

Number of employees

4 full-time - 23 seasonal

Location

Village: Ammiq

District (Caza) : West Bekaa

Governorate (Mohafazat): Bekaa

Nearest cities

Chtaura: 12 Km- 15 minute drive

Zahle: 21 Km- 25 minute drive

Distance from capital Beirut

53 Km- 65 minute drive

Property size

2000 sq. m

Website & social media

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Tawlet-Ammiq/260736767373827>

<https://www.soukeltayeb.com/tawlet/ammiq/the-eco-restaurant/>

<https://www.soukeltayeb.com/tawlet/ammiq/contact-and-directions/>

Learnings from benchmarking- Tawlet & Beit Ammiq

Value proposition

“The Ammiq project is a truly authentic experience that marries the agricultural traditions of the village’s inhabitants with eco-friendly and sustainable practices.”

***Tawlet Ammiq**, the restaurant, “is a space for guests to enjoy traditional meals and the most well-kept secret recipes, prepared with love and the freshest ingredients by local cooks.”*

*Located near the restaurant, **Beit Ammiq**, the guesthouse, is “home away from home with traditional warm wood interiors and soothing natural lighting. A place to dine under star lit skies and wake up to breathtaking scenery, then to feast on a traditional Lebanese breakfast.”*

Learnings from benchmarking- Tawlet & Beit Ammiq

Key features

- *Tawlet Ammiq and Beit Ammiq are the eco-friendly restaurant and guesthouse of the Shouf Biosphere Reserve located in the Ammiq Park House overlooking the Bekaa valley.*
- *Situated on the eastern slopes of Mount Lebanon in the tranquil village of Ammiq, the facility, with its low-key relaxed atmosphere is accessible only by a dirt road near the wetlands of Ammiq. It's located in a simple and spacious building with outdoor and rooftop seating, boasting tremendous views of the mountains and the fertile plain of West Bekaa. The restaurant offers a producers' festive buffet on weekends, Private functions, events, and conference facilities, Wines of the Bekaa" boutique and Dekenet Ammiq (the shop) for a selection of regional foods "mouneh", handcrafts, and publications. Information on environmental and eco-tourism activities in and around the Reserve.*
- *The guesthouse with its four rooms offers Bed & Breakfast for visitors.*
- *The vision behind its creation of the facility is to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the region, celebrate food and traditions that unite the communities there and support small-scale farmers and producers – particularly as they pursue a culture of sustainable agriculture.*
- *The facility is established to support the eco-tourism and rural development objectives of the Shouf Biosphere Reserve.*
- *The concept of the facility was inspired by wild Jordan Center.*

<https://www.wildjordan.com/content/center>

Learnings from benchmarking- Tawlet & Beit Ammiq

Service/product offering (I)

Service/product

Description

Bed & Breakfast

- *The B&B comprises four rooms, with a capacity of 2 persons per room. Each room has its own bathroom*
- *The rooms feature a double bed that can be configured as twin*
- *The rooms are decorated to match the surrounding environment with light wooden tones, luscious indoor plants, brightly colored artwork*
- *Traditional Lebanese Breakfast is included and dinner upon request*
- *Amenities include: air conditioning, heating, WIFI, parking, private bathroom, terrace overlooking the Bekaa valley*

Food & Beverage

- *On Weekends, the restaurant offers an open buffet concept with very rich and varied menu of traditional Lebanese and region specific cuisine at a fixed price per person*
- *On weekdays the service is à la carte*
- *The Restaurant started with a capacity of 120 seats and now attained a full capacity of 250 seats*

Learnings from benchmarking- Tawlet & Beit Ammiq

Service/product offering (II)

Service/product

Description

Shop

Farmers Shop “Dekenet” situated at the entrance of the restaurant, offers a wide selection of regional “mouneh”, handicrafts and specially designed collectibles from Souk el Tayeb grouped under one label, along with regional cookbooks and wines of the Bekaa Boutique

Meeting venue

- *Baptized “Corporate Ammiq”, the facility offers is a venue for corporate activities: team building sessions, seminars, workshops, and management retreats. All conference facilities and needed equipment (internet connection, data projector, flip chart) are available*
- *The space can accommodate 60 persons in conference setting, and 60 persons in dining setting. It offers a three break out rooms, and numerous green spaces*
- *Corporate events can foresee hiking activities on trails through the nearby wetlands and guided tours that can be arranged through the Shouf Cedar Reserve*
- *If a more than a day stay is needed, B&B for large groups can be arranged in nearby hotels in the area*

Learnings from benchmarking- Tawlet & Beit Ammiq

Service/product offering (III)

Seasonability of service offering

- *As of 2019, the operation schedule of the facility extends from March to November. It closes only three months (December to February). In previous years it used to open from July to November*
- *In 2019, the peak of occupancy rate for the B&B was in August (51%). Lowest occupancy is 30% in March Oct. and Nov*
- *The number of restaurant's clients peaks in August, with the high season extending from August to September. The lowest month in terms of client count is November*

Learnings from benchmarking- Tawlet & Beit Ammiq

Target market

- *Restaurant clients are families and non-families from all over Lebanon, Lebanese and non-Lebanese. The prices suggest that the facility caters mostly for well-off middle class clientele and above (restaurant: \$45 /pers., Accommodation: \$130/room/night)*
- *Restaurant clients are mostly those visiting the Ammiq Wetlands as an attraction. A Smaller portion of the clients is related to those entering the Shouf Biosphere reserve from the Bekaa entrance*
- *Number of guests in 2019 attained 17,837 persons*

Supportive key attractions

- *The facility is situated in the village of Ammiq in west Bekaa, one of the most fertile parts of the Bekaa Valley. It sits on the eastern slopes of Mount Lebanon, a few meters above the valley. The village of Ammiq falls within the Shouf Biosphere Reserve (SBR), declared a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 2005; within it is the Al-Shouf Cedar Reserve (the largest in Lebanon) and Ammiq Wetland (Ramsar Site). The key attractions for tourists are:*
 - ✓ *The Ammiq Wetland (100 hectares) is the last significant wetland in Lebanon, a remnant of extensive marshes and lakes that once covered parts of the Bekaa Valley. This natural spot remains an important staging and wintering area for migratory water birds en route from Europe to Africa. Ammiq's wetlands, valleys and mountains make it an ideal place for outdoor activities like walking, hiking, bird watching, biking and exploring nature trails*
 - ✓ *Al-Shouf Cedar Reserve with forests and mountain trails*
- *Several wine production domains. The area is the most important in Lebanon for wine production*

Learnings from benchmarking- **Tawlet & Beit Ammiq**

Social impact

- *The cumulative contribution of the project to the local economy between 2012 and 2019 is around \$2,100,000.00 spent on purchase of goods, specialized services, employees, fuel and transportation, gas, sales of local mouneh products, internet, maintenance. Purchases of goods being the highest.*
- *All employees at the facility are from the area*

Environmental impact

- *Tawlet Ammiq is housed in one of the greenest buildings in Lebanon. Among its green features are Canadian wells – a unique insulation system – solar chimneys, a green roof, and a solar energy system*
- *The environmentally friendly building has:*
 - ✓ *a high thermal performance building envelope*
 - ✓ *naturally assisted cooling*
 - ✓ *lighting at minimum cost*
 - ✓ *solar water heating*
 - ✓ *smoke free and music-free environment*
- *The building uses 80-percent less energy to operate than a conventional construction*
- *All waste (mostly organic) is sorted and recycled*
- *Part of the revenues generated from the facility go to the managing organizations of Al-Shouf Cedar Reserve and Ammiq Wetlands, serving their preservation and conservation mission*

Learnings from benchmarking- Tawlet & Beit Ammiq

Structure, Governance and Management (I)

Structure and governance

- *The facility was established as a part of regional program to support some protected sites in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, funded By Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and implemented by Royal Society for Conservation and Nature (Jordan).*
- *The eco restaurant is established to support the conservation efforts of al-Shouf Cedar Society and AROCHA (operating then in Ammiq Wetlands among other sites)*
- *The land is donated by Skaff Estate*
- *The site is located in the village of Ammiq that falls in the development zone of the Shouf Biosphere Reserve (SBR)*
- *The facility is a joint venture by ARZ El Chouf Association, Skaff Family and AROCHA. Now that AROCHA is no more present in Lebanon, the facility is owned by Al- Shouf Cedar Society and Skaff Estate.*
- *It is operated and managed since 2014 by SETS for Food (Souk El Tayeb brand), a private sector corporation*
- *The management and operation is contracted to SETS. The contract was won by sets based on a call for proposals based on detailed terms of reference in line with local development principles (benefit of local economy, environmental impact, preservation and promotion of local and cultural food heritage, etc...). SETS won based on best technical proposal, including experience and portfolio. The contract is for 25 years and stipulates that 8.5% of total yearly revenues go to facility owners (Shouf Cedar Society 50% and Skaff Estate 50%)*
- *The land is owned by Skaff family. Partners would use the money to projects related to local development and environment protection and conservation in both Ammiq Wetlands and Al-Shouf Cedar Reserve*

Learnings from benchmarking- Tawlet & Beit Ammiq

Structure, Governance and Management (II)

Management

- *SETS (Souk El Tayeb) operates and manages the facility*
- *SETS head office oversees the whole operation of the facility (planning, concept development, product development, quality assurance, etc...) and is in charge of marketing, accounting and audit, legal issues, government relation, etc...*
- *The facility team is composed of the following staff:*
- *1 head chef, 3 cooks, 4 stewards, 1 gardener and maintenance officer, 1 admin assistant, 1 head waiter, 8 waiters, 1 runner and 1 animator*
- *Legally, the facility is a corporate project with all what this entails in terms of applicable laws and taxes*

Learnings from benchmarking- Tawlet & Beit Ammiq

Financial sustainability

Capital cost

- *The total initial cost of building and equipping the restaurant is USD 802000, donated by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation(SDC)*

Restaurant revenues

- *The restaurant business has been showing growth year after year. Revenues increased from \$410.5K in 2016 to \$702K in 2019 representing a growth of 71% in 4 years. In 2019 the revenue grew 13% as compared to 2018*
- *The total number of guests in 2019 attained 17,837 persons*
- *The partners (Al-Shouf Cedar Forest and Skaff Estate) fee/share from revenues in 2019 amounted \$56K*
- *The 2019 net profit amounted \$132K*
- *The cost per person for the meal formula (open buffet, open drinks with large variety) is USD 45/person*

B&B revenues

- *The 2019 revenue amounted \$45k*
- *Room Occupancy increased by 14% in 2019 as compared to 2018 (237 occupied rooms along the year)*
- *Room rates: double occupancy USD 130 USD/per night (VAT excluded)*

Learnings from benchmarking- Tawlet & Beit Ammiq

Evolution journey

2012: opening of the facility with a capacity of 120 seats for the restaurant

2014: SETS (Souk El Tayeb) takes over the operation of the facility

2016: Restaurant capacity was expanded to the maximum, reaching 250 seats

2018: start of daily opening in summer

2019: start of daily opening as of April 16th

Learnings from benchmarking- Tawlet & Beit Ammiq

Enablers

- *The area is reputed for wine production and wineries is strongly present on the tourism map visited by wine lovers*
- *Being within the shouf biosphere reserve gives the facility more attention and exposure*
- *Increase in demand on quality rural tourism services in the well-off social classes*

Challenges

Internal

- *The ongoing challenge is to keep a balance between profitability and growth on one side and the principles and ethics of local development, and environment preservation*

External

- *Social and political instability*
- *Economic crisis*

Learnings from benchmarking- **Tawlet & Beit Ammiq**

Advantages

- *The fact that the facility is situated between both Ammiq Wetlands and the Al Shouf Cedar Reserve places it at the heart of an important tourism path*
- *Strong industry experience of the managing/operating organization*
- *Souk Al Tayeb has positive reputation and is a strong brand name*
- *High quality service*
- *The facility is located in charming rural landscape*
- *Very good marketing*

Impression

- *Tawlet & Beirt Ammiq is a very successful business that showed exponential growth and increase of revenues. The success is primarily due to the professional management and operation of the facility*
- *It is a successful model of private public partnership with evidenced social and environmental impact*
- *Ammiq model is a proof of sizeable demand of quality service in rural tourism in Lebanon*

Learnings from benchmarking- Taanayel ecolodge & Restaurant

General information

Year of establishment

- *Ecolodge: 2006*
- *Khan Al Maksoud Restaurant: 2009*

Number of employees

21 full-time

Location

Village: Taanayel
District (Caza) : Zahle
Governorate (Mohafazat): Bekaa

Nearest cities

Chtaura: 5.4 Km- 8 minute drive
Zahle: 12 Km- 18 minute drive

Distance from capital Beirut

51 Km- 60 minute drive

Property size

2150 sq. m

Website & social media

<https://www.arcenciel.org/activities/ecolodge-de-taanayel/>

<https://www.facebook.com/ecolodge.taanayel/>

<https://www.instagram.com/explore/locations/774221324/arc-en-ciel-eco-lodge-taanayel>

Learnings from benchmarking- Taanayel ecolodge & Restaurant

Value proposition

- *“The Ecolodge offers to the guests the opportunity to experience the authentic way of life of the region by staying in a traditional architecture facility built with clay bricks. Guests sleep on wool mattresses on the ground- as the ancestors did”*
- *“Khan Al Maksoud restaurant: with its lush gardens, it is an ideal place for country-style lunches and group gatherings offering rustic regional specialties”*

Learnings from benchmarking- Taanayel ecolodge & Restaurant

Key features

- *The facility includes the traditional Hotel (Ecolodge) & Restaurant (Khan Al Makssoud)*
- *The architecture is made up of several adobe stone houses built according to the regional traditional architecture. The architecture is inspired by the old Lebanese way of building with clay bricks and conserves the cultural heritage of the region*
- *The rooms' settings respect the Lebanese traditions, from the painting of the walls to the decorations and all the way to the slightest details (windows, doors, handicraft work, mattresses on the floor...)*
- *The heating is provided by Diesel-fired stoves*
- *The ecolodge and the restaurant share a common outdoor green space (green grass and trees)*
- *The facility is a "living" museum featuring traditional architecture of the region. It is a cultural heritage attraction at the same time. It is a destination for study visits by schools and architecture students*

Learnings from benchmarking- Taanayel ecolodge & Restaurant

Service/product offering (I)

Service/product	Description
Bed & Breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Traditional Hotel (Ecolodge) composed of 7 units (rooms) that can accommodate a maximum of 5 persons each. Full capacity: 35 persons</i>• <i>Each room of the Ecolodge has a private bathroom with hot water showers powered by solar energy</i>• <i>The ecolodge offers traditional food served for breakfast, lunch and dinner at "Khan al Maksoud" a Lebanese restaurant located next to the lodge</i>
Food & Beverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Khan Al Makssoud, on the same property as the Ecolodge, is a traditional Lebanese restaurant that offers country-style lunches and rustic regional specialties</i>• <i>The Restaurant's full capacity is 400 persons in summer (using outdoors space) and 120 persons in winter (indoors)</i>

Learnings from benchmarking- Taanayel ecolodge & Restaurant

Service/product offering (II)	
Service/product	Description
Cultural heritage events & activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Arak yearly festival</i> • <i>Apples' harvest yearly festival</i>
Groups hosting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Offering B&B and restaurant services for retreats, workshops, team-building activities and seminars: NGOs, corporations and other groups</i> • <i>Hosting summer camps (for now only the youth summer camps of arcenciel)</i> • <i>The restaurant is used as meeting space</i>
Other activities on the facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Board games, basketball, volley ball (full size field), ping pong, baby foot, Bird watching (migration season)</i>
Seasonability of service offering	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Opens all months of the year</i> • <i>High season is from June through November. With Peak in July & August for both ecolodge and restaurant</i> • <i>December through February is almost a dead season</i> 	

Learnings from benchmarking- Taanayel ecolodge & Restaurant

Target market

- *60% of ecolodge clients are non-Lebanese (mostly European and north American) coming through travel and tourism agencies*
- *30 % of ecolodge clients are Lebanese families and groups of friends*
- *10% of clients are groups using it for retreats and seminars*
- *The restaurant's clients are mostly Lebanese with a large proportion from the neighboring villages and towns and the northern and west Bekaa as well. It has become a meeting/gathering point for them*
- *The restaurant is as well a stop for travelers and users of the Damascus international road that connects Lebanon with Syria and other Arab countries*
- *The prices of both ecolodge and restaurant suggest that it is accessible to the middle class*

Supportive key attractions

- *Nearby "Domaine de Taanayel" (Jesuit's Convent, Dairy Farm and Nature Park) is the main attraction for tourists in the immediate geography of the facility. The "Domaine" is operated by arcenciel, the owner organization of Taanayel Ecolodge and Khan al Maksoud Restaurant. In this site, it is possible to go for a walk or jogging in nature, to rent a bicycle, petting activities, children playground, buy traditional dairy products from the shop, back horse riding. The ecolodge has packages and offerings for the "Domaine" for its guests (free entrance and bicycle rental...). The ecolodge and restaurant rely much on the "Domaine" visitors*
- *Wineries in Bekaa Valley are a destination for tourists*
- *Archeological Umayyad site of Anjar*
- *Being situated near the International Damascus Road, one of the busiest routes connecting Lebanon with Syria and through to Jordan, Iraq and Arab Gulf Countries, the facility restaurant has become a stop for many users of the road. Additionally, being close to the Damascus road makes it very accessible for the whole Bekaa being a in mid-way to all*

Learnings from benchmarking- Taanayel ecolodge & Restaurant

Social impact

- *Profits are used to fund arcenciel's social and local development work*
- *The facility has initiated the tourism activity in the area. It is now, along with the nearby "Domaine de Taanayel" operated by arcenciel as well, the center of tourism activity in the region*
- *The facility provides 21 jobs for persons from local communities*
- *Dairy products, fruits and vegetables are provided by local producers for the facility restaurant*

Environmental impact

- *Hot water is all from solar energy*
- *Solid waste sorting is done at the source (on-site)*
- *The clay brick architecture is energy efficient and helps reduce energy consumption in winter and provides a good shelter from heat with no need for air-conditioning in hot Bekaa summer*

Learnings from benchmarking- Taanayel ecolodge & Restaurant

Structure, Governance and Management (I)

Structure and governance

- *The ecolodge and Khan Al Maksoud facility is owned and Managed by Arc En Ciel (aec) NGO. <https://www.arcenciel.org>. It is part of its tourism and agriculture local development program*
- *Arcenciel's central administration supervises the management of the facility that has its own management team*
- *Arcenciel's central administration is in charge of the marketing advertising, communication, business development, human resources management, and maintenance of the facility*
- *Profits generated from the facility are exempt from taxation as the facility is a project of arcenciel NGO that has the status of public benefit institution (status that exempts organizations from some taxes). The paid taxes are VAT and municipal property tax*
- *The ecolodge has the legal status of youth hostel and is registered with the ministry of youth and sports only and has no administrative relation with the ministry of tourism*

Management

- *The facility has a total of 21 full-time employees:*
 - ✓ *1 manager responsible for the whole facility (ecolodge and restaurant)*
 - ✓ *1 client relation officer for both ecolodge and restaurant*
 - ✓ *1 cleaning person for ecolodge*
 - ✓ *18 workers at restaurant including 1 head chef*

Learnings from benchmarking- Taanayel ecolodge & Restaurant

Financial sustainability

- *The restaurant has the highest revenues volume due to clients numbers*
- *The 2019 accounts of the facility combining restaurant and accommodation show a (-13%) net loss. A 7.4% profit is achieved Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization (EBITDA)*
- *In general, the revenues from restaurant compensate for those of the accommodation*
- *The facility benefits from donations as a project of an NGO serving a mission. As such the restaurant kitchen was totally renovated and equipped with a donation*
- *Despite the losses in 2019, some previous years were profitable. The growth and profitability have been fluctuating throughout the years for several internal and external reasons*
- *Overall, the facility is being self sustainable*

Price list

- *Ecolodge*
 - ✓ *Individual reservation for 1 person per room: USD 35/pers. on weekdays and USD 50/pers. on weekend (incl. B&B + free entrance to Domaine de Taanayel and 1 hr. bicycle rent)*
 - ✓ *Reservation for 2 persons and more per room: USD 30/pers. on weekdays and USD 40/pers. on weekend (incl. B&B + free entrance to Domaine de Taanayel and 1 hr. bicycle rent)*

Restaurant

- *A la carte*

Learnings from benchmarking- Taanayel ecolodge & Restaurant

Evolution journey

2006: opening of the ecolodge. Offering only B&B services

2006-2008: business stagnation with political turbulences (the 2006 Israeli war on Lebanon, the 2007 war in Nahr El Bared Camp in North Lebanon and the May 7, 2008 security events in Beirut)

2009: growth in demand and increase in guests numbers. Increase of demand on F&B services

2010: Opening of Khan Al Maksoud restaurant

Learnings from benchmarking- Taanayel ecolodge & Restaurant

Enablers

- *The existence of the Domaine Taanayel as an attraction pole operated by aec and the offered packages helped increase the demand and the number of users of the ecolodge and the Khan restaurant*
- *The Bekaa is on the tourism map of Lebanon and is a destination for tourists for its wineries and the archeological sites of Anjar and Baalbeck*

Challenges

Internal

- *The capacity of the client relation officer is weak and requires development*
- *Weak marketing linkages with tourism market*
- *Weaknesses in management*

External

- *The closeness of the facility location to the Syrian border and the consequent political instability, tensions and high affluence of refugees since the start of war in Syria have affected tourism in the region and the number of visitors decreased*
- *The harshness of winter: the access to the Bekaa valley through Mount Lebanon (Tarchich and Dahr AL Baydar) is challenging and visitors avoid in winter time*
- *Some competition on similar services is appearing (green spaces with rustic mood): Sama Chtaura and the Mall*

Learnings from benchmarking- Taanayel ecolodge & Restaurant

Advantages

- *The uniqueness of model (the architecture and place as a non-conventional experience)*
- *The good reputation*
- *The capacity of arcenciel central management*
- *Being owned by a non-profit organization and being part of its local development program, the facility/project can benefit from donations (example: equipment of an industrial kitchen was donated)*
- *Profit tax exemption Being project of an NGO with a status of “public benefit organization”*
- *The maintenance cost of the building architecture is higher than that of the standard stone and concrete buildings*
- *The location of the facility close to Damascus International road while at the same time hidden from noise and embraced by greenery offers an easy-to- access appealing rest stop for travelers*
- *The ecolodge as a model has no real competitor in the region*

Impression

- *Taanayel ecolodge and restaurant did not reach its full potential yet and has been sustainable so far despite the internal weaknesses and external challenges*
- *The facility has structural weaknesses in management and marketing and has little or no linkages with tourism stakeholders.*
- *Despite the weaknesses in management that affect the quality of service, the weak marketing and the destabilizing security and political events throughout its journey, the facility’s restaurant clients base has been growing and expanding along with the tourism growth in the area*
- *The uniqueness of the identity and the affordable prices of the restaurant increases competitiveness*
- *Being the first and only tourist facility in the area, the facility become a strong brand in the area’s tourism landscape*

Learnings from benchmarking- **Arz Ehmej**

General information

Year of establishment

2011

Number of employees

4 full-time

23 seasonal

Location

Village: Ehmej

District (Caza) : Jbeil

Governorate (Mohafazat): Mount Lebanon

Nearest cities

Byblos: 24 Km- 27 minute drive

Distance from capital Beirut

60 Km- 60 minute drive

Property size

Circa 50.000 sq. m.

Website & social media

<https://www.facebook.com/arzehmejl/>

<http://www.ehmej.org/en/arz-ehmej-packages/>

<https://www.instagram.com/explore/locations/907584677/arz-ehmej/?hl=en>

Learnings from benchmarking- **Arz Ehmej**

Value proposition

- *No clear value proposition. However the site/project proposes to visitors:*
 - ✓ *“Unspoiled forests, cliffs, and valleys, Ehmej is the perfect destination for your adventure travel all year round.”*
 - ✓ *Environment, food, forest, trail, children activities/recreation*

Learnings from benchmarking- **Arz Ehmej**

Key features

- *The facility is situated adjacent to a nature forest of cedars and iron oaks in a beautiful scenic context. It is composed of the following:*
 - ✓ *A three-story modern concrete and stone building with no specific architectural identity/character. The building hosts the restaurant and a dormitory in the upper floor*
 - ✓ *An outdoors area in front of the building serving as seating extension for the restaurant and multipurpose space for different activities such as open air groups meetings, exhibitions...*
 - ✓ *A outdoors space dedicated for recreational and sports activities*
 - ✓ *Five bungalows to one side of the main building*

Learnings from benchmarking- **Arz Ehmej**

Service/product offering (I)

Service/product	Description
Bed & Breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>A dormitory in the same building of the restaurant (upper floor) with a capacity of 21 pers. The dormitory model did not work as there is no market demand for such service</i>• <i>5 bungalows in two sizes are available: small bungalows with capacity of accommodating 4 persons & big bungalows with capacity of accommodating 6 pers.</i>• <i>Bathroom and F&B services are provided in the main building (shared)</i>• <i>Heating in Bungalows is provided through woodfired stoves</i>• <i>Heating of main building and hot water are provided by a diesel-fired central boiler</i>
Food & Beverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Fully equipped restaurant operating in summer and winter with indoors and outdoors space. The restaurant full capacity is 500 persons in summer and 90 persons in winter. The restaurant offers breakfast, lunch and dinner</i>

Learnings from benchmarking- **Arz Ehmej**

Service/product offering (II)

Service/product	Description
Cultural heritage events & activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>The facility organizes a yearly “Mouneh” exhibit event, “the Mouneh festival” open for local agri-food producers and farmers to exhibit their products for selling against a participation fee</i>• <i>The event is festive and attracts a large number of visitors from outside the village who stop to buy products or have breakfast, lunch or dinner or spend a day of outdoor activities on the trail and in the facility. The event extends over a week in September</i>• <i>The activity is quite successful and exhibitors are satisfied with the sales results</i>
Groups hosting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>B&B and F&B for retreats, seminars and teambuilding. The indoors and outdoors spaces of the restaurant are used as meeting space</i>

Learnings from benchmarking- **Arz Ehmej**

Service/product offering (III)

Service/product	Description
Other activities on the facility	<p><i>Sports</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Small children playground with few equipment</i>• <i>Zipline</i>• <i>Monkey course</i>• <i>Horseback riding</i>• <i>Tiro (n.b. not eco-friendly at all)</i> <p><i>Culture</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Some food thematic dinners are organized and promoted</i> <p><i>In addition to the above activities, the following packages are available:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Small budget packages for one day</i>• <i>Team building package for 2 days</i>• <i>Two days week-end package</i>• <i>Package 'Art & nature'</i>• <i>One day program package all year long</i>• <i>Adventure package: An escape to Ehmej: 3 days of guided hiking in the Ehmej region, includes full board accommodation in Ehmej hostel (shared rooms)</i>• <i>School Packages: Forests and Farms Experiences in Ehmej area</i>

Learnings from benchmarking- **Arz Ehmej**

Service/product offering (IV)

Seasonability of service offering

- Facility (B&B and restaurant) is open all year round
- The high season is in July, Aug and Sept.
- In winter, the business peaks when the ski season is good. If no ski, the facility activity runs very low
- In summer the facility is most of the time fully-booked

Learnings from benchmarking- **Arz Ehmej**

Target market

- *Visitors/clients are in majority from outside the village, mostly families and groups of friends*
- *The locals from Ehmej and surroundings are restaurant users*
- *Schools are targets through eco/environment awareness program for students. Big schools were attracted through special offerings and activity packages (this stopped due to lack of follow-up)*
- *The cost of services is affordable for the middle class*

Supportive key attractions

- *The location of the facility in the nature framework of The Ehmej cedar and iron oak (Quercus Cerris) forest and beautiful nature surroundings*
- *Several hiking trails in Ehmej and surroundings. Ehmej is a side trail of Lebanon Mountain Trail)*
- *Laqlouq ski resort*
- *Ehmej summer festival*

Learnings from benchmarking- **Arz Ehmej**

Social impact

- *All suppliers of goods and services are locals*
- *The facility offers 23 seasonal jobs for people from village of Ehmej*
- *The 4 full-time jobs are for people from Ehmej*
- *Venue is offered free of charge for meeting of local organizations/committees*
- *Local community members get 10% discount*

Environmental impact

- *There is no clear organized policy or practices related to the environment although the values of preservation and protection of the environment are well declared by the Ehmej Development Association who operates the facility*
- *The Ehmej Development Association has undertaken some projects of reforestation and preservation and has also initiated environment awareness activities at the community level*
- *The facility concept is a responsible tourism project by the municipality of Ehmej and is branded as such with the services and activities it offers*

Learnings from benchmarking- **Arz Ehmej**

Structure, Governance and Management (I)

Structure and governance

- *The facility/project of Park Arz Ehmej is owned by the municipality that conceived and established it*
- *The land over which the facility is built is a municipal common under the joint authority of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Municipality of Ehmej*
- *The facility was handed to the Ehmej Development Association to develop and manage it since the municipality did not legally have the right to generate income from the facility or directly invest in it due to land ownership issue (law of municipal commons use and shared authority over the land with the Ministry of Agriculture). A “façade” MoU was signed between the Municipality and Ehmej Development Association, whereby the latter can develop the facility and operate it using municipal funds as donations to the association. All generated income is to be strictly used by the association for the development and operation of the project. The Municipality supervises the disbursement of funds and all operation activities*
- *Many of the municipal board are members of the association*
- *The facility has no defined legal status yet and pays no taxes of any kind*
- *At the end of September 2019 an arrangement was reached with the Ministry of Interior which allows the municipality of Ehmej to benefit directly from the facility as an investment project and hence directly generate income from it*
- *Based on the new legal arrangement, the municipality will lease the operation of the facility to a third party through a call for proposals. Terms of reference for the call are being developed*

Learnings from benchmarking- **Arz Ehmej**

Structure, Governance and Management (II)

Management

- *The Municipality of Ehmej manages the facility through Ehmej Development Association. Decision-making is at municipality level in partnership with the association*
- *The facility has the following full-time staff:*
 - ✓ *1 manager*
 - ✓ *1 restaurant chef/supervisor*
 - ✓ *1 employee for B&B*
 - ✓ *1 Concierge/guard/maintenance*
- *23 seasonal workers are recruited every year for diverse jobs on the facility*

Learnings from benchmarking- **Arz Ehmej**

Financial sustainability (I)

- *The overall amount invested in the development of the facility over several years is circa USD 1.1 million as follows:*
 - ✓ *USD 500.000: US government donation for the construction of the main building initially conceived to be a center for firefighting*
 - ✓ *USD 266.000: municipal funds*
 - ✓ *USD 324.000: donations on specific projects in the facility from different sources: DAI, AFDC, IRG, USAID, AUB, USJ*
- *Income is generated through bungalows rent as B&B, the restaurant, the fees for use of sports and leisure activity installations on the site, the diverse packages offered to visitors and the participation fees in “mouneh” event*
- *Price List*
 - ✓ *Cost of small Bungalow: (Winter: \$ 100/day on weekend, LBP 100.000/weekday)- (Summer \$ 150/day on weekend, LBP 150.000/weekday)*
 - ✓ *Cost of big Bungalow: (Winter: \$ 150/day on weekend, LBP 150.000/weekday)- (Summer \$ 200/day on weekend, LBP 200.000/weekday)*
 - ✓ *Restaurant: Formulas of \$ 25, \$ 30, \$ 35 per person*

Learnings from benchmarking- **Arz Ehmej**

Financial sustainability (II)

- *Price List (cont'd)*
 - ✓ *Packages:*
 - *Adventure package: An escape to Ehmej : 3 days of guided hiking in the Ehmej region, includes full board accommodation in Ehmej hostel (shared rooms). For a group of 5 persons minimum: 170\$/person, For a group of 10persons minimum: 135\$/person*
 - *School Packages – Forests and Farms Experiences in Ehmej area. One day farm tourism. For a group of 25 persons minimum: 16\$/person*
 - *Small budget packages. For one day. For a group of 15 persons minimum: 27\$/person*
 - *Team building 2 days. 10 – 50 pax: 200 \$, 50 – 100 pax: 150 \$*
 - *Family package – Live the mountain. Two days week-end: 76\$/p for parents, 84\$/p for children over 10 and 94\$/p for children under 10*
 - *Package 'Art & nature'. One day program, all year long. For a group of 10 persons minimum: 38\$/person*
- *The facility is not yet profitable due to unclear governance structure and incompetent management. Yet the potential is high due to high volume of guests*
- *The bungalows are profitable but the restaurant is not*

Learnings from benchmarking- **Arz Ehmej**

Evolution journey

Since the beginning in 2011, the project grew progressively over time like a puzzle without a clear vision where new components and services were added cumulatively

2011: the start

- *The idea started with the initiation of the municipality to plan for developing tourism in the village within the environment protection committee at the municipality. Initially the aim was to preserve and protect the forest while boosting ecotourism. Since a municipal building for forest firefighting was previously built with a donation from the US Ministry of Defense but was never put into use as it lacked equipment and funding, the idea was to use it as a center for local tourism since it is located near the forest in full nature*
- *In the very first year of opening, the building was used to host a snack bar and a two-room B&B. The outdoors space in front of the building was used as seating area and next to it the ropes course and zipline were installed.*

2016: the expansion

- *Installation of bungalows*
- *Opening of indoors restaurant: expansion and equipment of kitchen and redesign of indoors to accommodate 90 persons*
- *Installation of outdoors children playground*

The expansion led to exponential increase in guests and activity in the facility

September 2019

The facility is not operating awaiting for the municipality to lease its operation to a third party through a call for proposals

Learnings from benchmarking- **Arz Ehmej**

Enablers

- *Closeness to Laklouk Ski resort increases visitors traffic and demand*
- *Ehmej is a destination for summer residency and summer tourism*
- *Existence of several hiking trails in the area*
- *Beautiful nature*
- *No competitors*
- *The Ehmej yearly summer festival attracts a lot of visitors to Ehmej*
- *The increase of demand in local market for rural and nature related tourism*

Challenges

Internal

- *Weak management with no experience*
- *Poor governance*
- *Lack of clear business plan*
- *Weak marketing*
- *The municipality accumulated debts in developing the facility which limited its contribution/investment in management and operation (professional staff is expensive)*
- *Ambiguity of legal status*
- *The project was developed in bits and pieces like a mosaic without clear vision and plan*

External

- *Limited number of visitors to the area in winter*
- *Limited tourism activities in winter*
- *Decrease in purchase capacity and the economic crisis in recent years*
- *Decrease in funding for rural tourism projects in Mount Lebanon by International Donors*
- *Absence of tourism development plan in the area*
- *Weak central policies for tourism in general and for local and rural tourism in specific*

Learnings from benchmarking- **Arz Ehmej**

Advantages

- *The facility access to municipal funding allowed expansion and covered losses*
- *The location of the facility near the forest in a beautiful nature frame*
- *Good reputation of the managing organization with donors*
- *Partnership with Municipality made access to grants to develop the facility easier*
- *The easy access to the facility and closeness to Byblos and Beirut*
- *Diversity of activities catering for diverse tourist categories' needs (children, young people, families, nature lovers, groups, etc...)*
- *The prices are affordable*

Impression

- *The facility expanded and grew despite considerable structural weaknesses at governance and management levels. However it did not achieve financial sustainability*
- *The client base expanded throughout the years despite all internal challenges*
- *The continuous increase in clients confirms the demand for services of such facility*
- *The facility did not reach its full potential yet*

Learnings from benchmarking- Key observations

- ❑ *Comparison between the three studied models confirms that good management is critical for success and sustainability. The advantage of Twalet and Beit Ammiq over the other two facilities is the sound business planning, the quality of service and the good marketing*
- ❑ *The beautiful nature, attractive surrounding landscapes and rural environment are key attraction elements for rural tourist facilities*
- ❑ *The number of clients grew in all the three studied models. Such growth even in Taanyel ecolodge and Arz Ehmej that suffer from internal weaknesses and external challenges shows the need for rural tourism related services*
- ❑ *The demand on good quality food and beverages services based on Lebanese rural culinary tradition is high in tourism market*
- ❑ *The studied models show that B&B and F&B services within the same facility complement each other's*

IV. Proposing a concept/model for the facility

Proposing a model/concept for the facility-

Reminder of model segments

Concept/model segments to be identified

Key questions to be answered by the research

KEY FEATURES & UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION

- What are the main characteristics and components of the facility?
- What is distinguished in what the facility offers and what is the promise for its users?

SERVICES & Products

- What services and products should the facility provide for its users?

TARGET MARKET

- Who are the service users of the facility?

SUPPORTIVE KEY ATTRACTIONS

- What are the magnet local natural resources and heritage that help increase facility users number?

SOCIAL & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- What should the impact of the facility be on the local community: how could the facility contribute to local development (local economy, local tourism, environment protection and conservation)?

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

- How should the facility be governed organized and managed?

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

- What are the revenue streams that help guarantee profitability and viability of the facility?

Proposing a model/concept for the facility

The analysis of findings of the assessment favors establishing a tourist facility in Kfarbnine for the following reasons:

- Danniyeh is witnessing an increase in numbers of visitors attracted by the beauty of nature and local heritage, which increases the demand on F&B and B&B services
- The region in general and the area of Kfarbnine and surroundings in particular has no B&B services nor restaurants to cater for the visitors. Pioneering investment in such services has a lot of competitive advantages. The demand can be created by making appealing services available through the facility. As such, the facility by itself can be an attraction for visitors
- The research about the three facilities in rural areas (Ammiq, Taanayel, Ehmej) shows an increase of demand on rural tourism among Lebanese citizens. The three studied models show growth in clients' numbers and expansion in services
- The locals in Danniyeh do tourism in their region and need nature related recreational activities
- Local mentality is more and more accepting of tourism and started to perceive its benefits and is supportive for tourism projects
- The following type of visitors to the region of Dannieh are identified:
 - ✓ Organized hikers (with LMT and other hiking groups) have the need for B&B and F&B services
 - ✓ Unorganized hiking individuals and groups
 - ✓ Families
 - ✓ Nature lovers
 - ✓ Schools

Proposing a model/concept for the facility

Advantages of having the the facility on the proposed land in Kfarbnine

- The area of Kfarbnine and surroundings is the least developed in Dannieyeh and a development project such as the facility is very much needed
- The proposed land for the facility is very suitable for the following reasons:
 - ✓ The 10.000 sq. meters of land area allow to diversify the services on the facility and guarantees a preserved natural surrounding which is crucial for the nature-related identity of such project
 - ✓ The land is adjacent to one of the entrances of the juniper forest proposed to become a nature reserve
 - ✓ The land is outside the built area of the village in a nature surrounding
 - ✓ The land has a panoramic breathtaking view of the Mediterranean sea with the Lebanese and Syrian littoral
 - ✓ The terrain is not too uneven which makes the development less costly
 - ✓ Water and electricity services infrastructure is close to the land which requires no additional investment in basic services infrastructure
 - ✓ Kfarbine as a village could be accessed from three directions: north Bekaa through Hermel, Akkar and Tripoli through Danniyeh villages
 - ✓ The location of the proposed land for the facility is mid-way between Akkar and Hermel, both highly potential touristic destinations

Proposing a model/concept for the facility

Introductory notes to proposed model/concept

- The proposed model is based primarily on findings of needs assessment and learnings from benchmarking
- The proposed model takes into consideration the following:
 - ✓ Needs of locals in terms of local tourism and nature-related recreational activities
 - ✓ Local young people's needs in terms of culture, sports and recreation
 - ✓ Needs of rural tourism market (current and potential)
 - ✓ The responsible rural tourism principles of conservation and preservation of nature and local heritage
- The proposed model combines tourists and locals needs in terms of services and activities (mixed model)
- The proposed model allows diversification and expansion of client base and service users
- A smaller size and capacity of the facility (B&B and restaurant) is ineffective, a larger one is high risk. With the proposed size, the facility can achieve its full capacity as the tourism market in the region has high potentials

Proposing a model/concept for the facility

Summary of the proposed model

1. A building with the following

- 10 to 15 guest rooms each with with a capacity of three persons and a private bathroom
- Restaurant and kitchen
- Meeting room (multipurpose)
- Reception area and lobby
- Shop

2. Outdoors space

- Seating area for restaurant
- Playground
- Ropes course & Zipline
- Picnic space

Proposing a model/concept for the facility

KEY FEATURES & UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION (I)

The proposed model requires the use of the entirety of the 10.000 sq. m. land

- The facility should be usable in all-seasons whereby the building is equipped with comfortable and energy efficient heating system

The facility shall be composed of the following sections:

- A building with:
 - ✓ 10 to 15 guest rooms each with a capacity of three persons and a private bathroom. **The option of 15 rooms allows to accommodate school groups. As per the experts, accommodation of a school group (1 classroom) requires the capacity of accommodating 45 persons. The choice of 10 or 15 rooms should be left to the assessment of cost between architects and GIZ. Another option that makes schools accommodation possible is to keep the design with 10 rooms and add 1 big room as a dormitory that can accommodate 15 persons**
 - ✓ A n indoors restaurant that accommodates up to 80 persons and a Kitchen
 - ✓ A meeting and multipurpose room that accommodates up to 30 persons
 - ✓ A shop space for selling local products
 - ✓ A reception area and lobby
- Outdoors space with:
 - ✓ Seating area for restaurant with 160 persons capacity
 - ✓ Children playground
 - ✓ Ropes course and zipline
 - ✓ Picnic space with trees and related infrastructure and equipment (e.g. grills)

Proposing a model/concept for the facility

KEY FEATURES & UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION (II)

- The facility should blend with the surrounding landscape with trees and green spaces
- The overall atmosphere should be relaxed, beautiful and simple
- Rooms, restaurant and picnic space should be comfortable
- *The facility should reflect the hiking spirit because trails and hiking are at the core of eco-tourism and because of the existence of facility next to the forest with its trails. As such, hiking trips could start at the facility if it is used for accommodation overnight for example. The architectural design could as well integrate the hiking spirit in a creative way such as a “symbolic walk” inside and outside the building that visitor can take*

The **unique value proposition** of the facility should draw on the following:

- ✓ A comfortable relaxed space in beautiful nature and an authentic rich and creative rural culinary experience

Proposing a model/concept for the facility

Service/product offering (I)

Service/product	Description
Bed & Breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A total of 10 to 15 rooms (<i>nb. to be decided</i>), with a capacity of 3 persons per room. Each room with a private bathroom.• Breakfast to be offered at the facility restaurant
Food & Beverages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A restaurant with an indoors space of a capacity of 80 persons and an outdoors space of a capacity of 160 persons• The restaurant is to propose an attractive culinary experience anchored in the region's tradition (country-style lunches and rustic regional specialties).
Shop	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A space to exhibit and sell local agri-food products and handicrafts
Picnic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A picnic space with green spaces, comfortable enough for a pleasurable nature experience The design is to provide possibility to grill.

Proposing a model/concept for the facility

Service/product offering (II)

Service/product	Description
Recreation & adventure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>A monkey course and zipline</i>• <i>Children playground</i>
Meeting venue	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>A multipurpose room equipped and furnished to accommodate business meetings and diverse public and group activities (conference, movie projection, etc.)</i>
Internet connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>The facility should be a free WIFI area connectable anywhere in the facility spots and rooms, with high debit capacity that allows streaming and fast online connectivity. The future generations will not watch movies (cinema or video style), as they are already into live streaming. So the connectivity debit and signal strength should high to match youth needs on that.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Services should be fairly priced and competitive</i>• <i>Diverse packages for diverse budgets and clients are to be developed</i>	

Proposing a model/concept for the facility

Target market & users (I)

Users of the facility are domestic market visitors and inbound foreigners who will use the facility via tour operators or independently. Main user segments are detailed below.

Users	Service
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Restaurant</i> • <i>B&B</i> • <i>Playground for Children</i> • <i>Zipline and Rope course for young children</i> • <i>Picnic space</i>
Hikers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bed & Breakfast</i> • <i>Restaurant</i>
Local community: families, young people, children, adults, CBOs, cooperatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Restaurant</i> • <i>Playground for Children</i> • <i>Zipline and Rope course for young people</i> • <i>Meeting venue: cultural, social and environment activities for local organizations, young people, children, CBOs</i> • <i>Picnic space for all</i>

Proposing a model/concept for the facility

Target market & users (II)	
Users	Service
Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Restaurant</i>• <i>B&B</i>• <i>Zipline and Rope course</i>• <i>Meeting venue</i>
Corporations, organizations and groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Retreats and seminars using B&B, Restaurant, venue , Zipline and Rope course</i>
Local farmers, agri-food producers, artisans	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Facility shop to exhibit and sell their products</i>

Proposing a model/concept for the facility

Supportive key attractions & activities (I)

1. The Lazzab (juniper) forest

The most important attraction in the area that the facility could benefit from.

- *A project to establish the forest as a nature reserve is underway (Lazzab Danniyeh Nature Reserve). The Danniyeh Union of Municipalities filed needed legal documents for establishing the reserve with the Ministry of Environment (MoE) in 2013. The MoE prepared a draft law that needs to be endorsed by the council of ministers first then sent to parliament for approval.*
- *The land proposed for the facility in Kfarbnine is just on the border of the reserve-to-be and is located on one of the three main entrances to the forest, the other two being Brissa and Qmamine.*
- *The forest offers to the visitors over 30 km of hiking trails of old cleared footpaths and agricultural roads, wild life observation, Hiking, Bird watching and snowshoeing.*

2. Natural sites

- *Zahlan Grotto discovered by the Spéléo Club du Liban (SCL) in 1964*
- *Kornet el Sawda peak offers a scenic view on Jabal el Makmel , one of the most significant mountain ranges in Lebanon and the Near East*

Proposing a model/concept for the facility

Supportive key attractions & activities (II)

3. Archeology

- *Roman columns, Sarcophagus, and Phoenician wells in Aymar*
- *Ruins of Aicha fortress in Karm el Mohr*
- *Castle of Aicha in Bchennata*
- *Ancient convent and wells in Debael*
- *Sfireh Roman temple*

4. Villages touring

5. Traditional food tasting

5. Enjoying local produce

5. Biking

Proposing a model/concept for the facility

Social & environmental impact

- *The facility should have eco-friendly practices in its operations*
- *The building should be eco-sustainable*
- *The facility should be a model for eco-friendly tourism*
- *The facility should be a catalyst for responsible tourism in the region by developing products and packages for visitors related to hiking, places to see, local heritage (agriculture, cuisine, agri-food production, historical sites, etc.)*
- *The shop on the facility should help market and promote local products (agri-food products and handcrafts)*
- *Facility should procure all service and products needed for its operation from the local communities of Danniyeh*
- *All jobs on the facility should be given to persons from local community and have to be gender-balanced*
- *The facility needs to have a code of conduct or a guide of best practices related to environment, responsible tourism, local development and gender equity*
- *The facility should be a catalyst for environment protection by promoting awareness in local communities through innovative events activities and other means by partnering with key stakeholders (local authorities, environment associations, CBOs, tour operators, etc)*
- *Locals should have special discounted prices on the facility services*

Proposing a model/concept for the facility

Structure, governance & management

- *The ownership is for the municipality of Kfarbnine*
- *It is crucial to form a multiparty board to govern the facility where the Kfarbine municipality, the Danniyeh Union of municipalities and trusted nature environment protection conservation and responsible tourism organizations are represented. A clear governance code should be drafted to organize roles, duties and responsibilities of the board and its members*
- *It is highly and critically recommended that the facility be managed and operated by a third party organization with expertise in the industry. Management is to be contracted pursuant to a call for proposals with clear terms of reference based on above stated best practices and principles*

Proposing a model/concept for the facility

Financial sustainability

- *All services on the facility should be offered for a price including use of picnic space, zipline and ropes course*
- *Local communities of Danniyeh should benefit from very advantageous discounts on all services*
- *Services should be fairly priced and competitive*
- *Diverse packages should be developed for diverse clients' needs, budgets and purchase capacity*
- *Market study and feasibility study are needed*
- *Optimal marketing strategy is needed*

Proposing a model/concept for the facility

Critical success factors

- *Good governance, good management and marketing*
- *Efficient integration of local population in the use and benefit from the facility services with advantages over visitors from outside the region is crucial for sustainability and community support on the long run*
- *For the facility to be successful and sustainable it should be strongly and intrinsically linked to the forest (a reserve-to-be) as a destination and attraction*

Proposing a model/concept for the facility

Identified opportunities for the facility

- *The efforts of the union of municipalities to preserve and conserve the natural resources and mostly to legally establish large parts of the forest as a nature reserve*
- *The region is getting more attention from tourists and number of visitors is increasing*
- *The region has a variety of local resources extending from natural assets to cultural heritage that are tourist-attractive such as agriculture, clean air, forests and beautiful nature (rocks, caves mountains, valleys..), agri-food production, culinary heritage, archeological sites, etc.*
- *The existence of LMT and other old trails in the area*
- *Hiking in nature is on the rise in Lebanon*
- *The support of the current presidency of the union of municipalities for the project and commitment to provide financial support in the first stages of operation*
- *The region has the potential to be a destination all-year round (hiking in spring and autumn, snow in winter and mild weather in summer)*
- *Economic crisis in the country can shift part of the outbound tourism of the Lebanese to local tourism*

Proposing a model/concept for the facility

Identified challenges & threats for the facility

- *The tourism volume in the area is not high enough yet for a facility to operate fully all-year-long especially in winter*
- *Mass tourism operators started to organize visits to the region, the impact on the environment is negative and can undermine conservation and protection efforts for the sake of quick profit rush. The rural local identity is at risk*
- *Poor condition of roads*
- *Tree cutting and hunting in the forest is so far unstoppable and no efficient legal measures and law enforcement are in place*
- *The project of the reserve is politically contentious and is not popular among local communities. People fear to lose privileges and benefits of land use in the reserve surroundings as well as the agricultural activities inside the lands proposed to be part of the reserve*
- *Lack of clear protection and conservation policies*
- *Lack of responsible tourism vision and policies in the region*
- *Mass tourism projects have started in the area especially in the high mountains*
- *Economic crisis in the country can affect spending on tourism*
- *Local communities do not have culture of responsible tourism*

Proposing a model/concept for the facility

Key risks

- *Incompetent management and operation of the facility hinders its growth and sustainability if directly managed by the municipality or the union*
- *Objection of locals for the project as being built on municipal land and consequent local political conflict over it*
- *The management and operation of the facility could be a subject of internal conflict and can become an issue of power game (priority of employment, conflict of interests, clientelism, etc.) if the Union and the municipality of Kfarbnine do not fully apprehend and adopt the vision of the project*
- *The success of the facility model can attract mass tourism investments to the region (result)*

V. General info

About Danniyeh

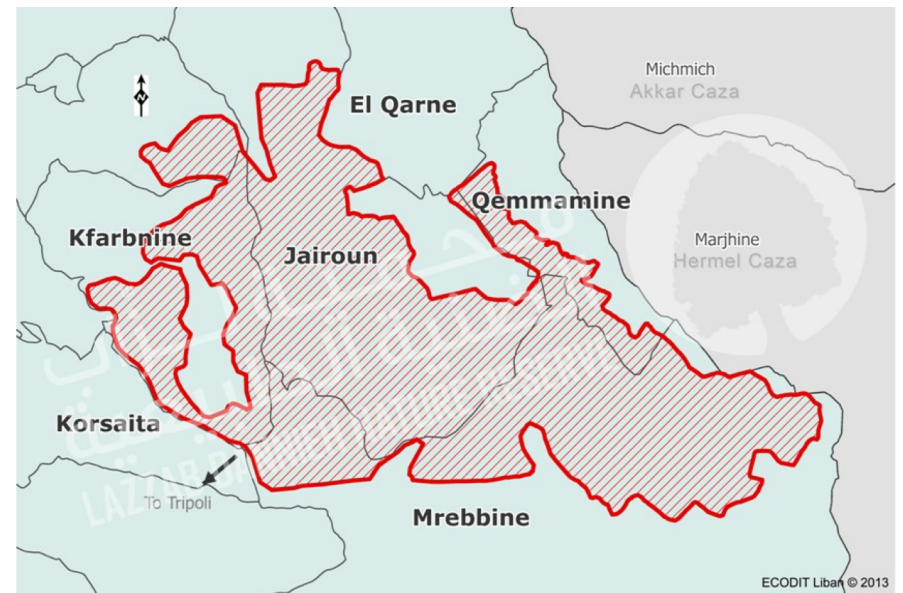
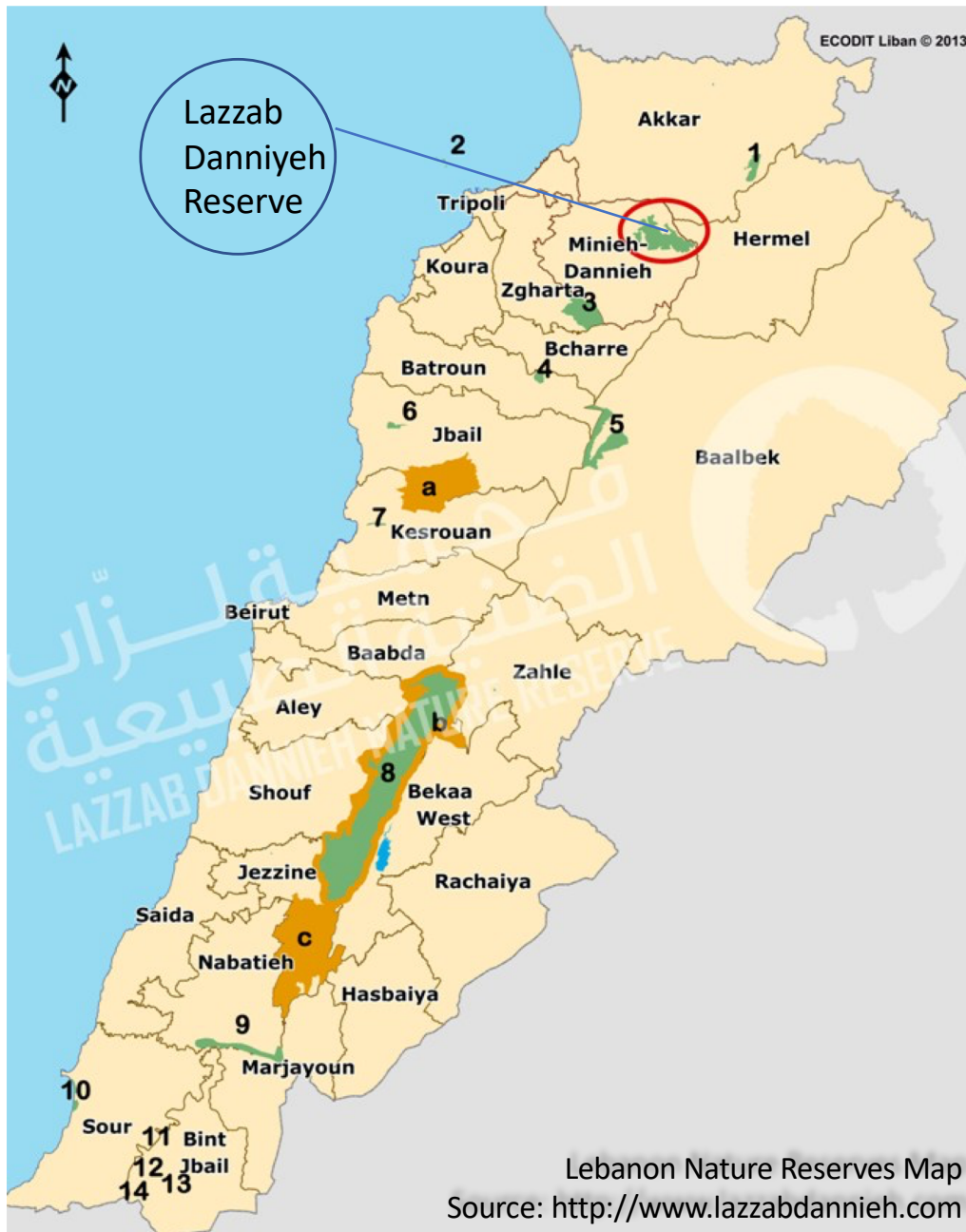
The Dannieh region is located in the upper part of the Minieh-Dannieh Caza in the Mohafazat of North Lebanon. Before the establishment of this Caza in 1993, the area was administratively attached to Tripoli. Dannieh is surrounded by the Caza of Hermel to the east, the city of Tripoli to the west, the Cazas of Zgharta and Bcharreh to the south, and the Mohafazat of Aakkar to the north.

Dannieh comprises 49 villages and covers around 90% of the Caza's total area. The remaining 10% is covered by Minieh. Access to the Hermel region is via the Sir-Jbab El Homr-Hermel road which traverses Lebanon's western mountain range. The Union of Dannieh Municipalities, established in 2004, regroups 23 municipalities from 28 exiting municipalities in Dannieh.

Dannieh has a rural character, with just a few large villages such as Bakhaoun and Sir. Agriculture is the preeminent economic activity, representing around 70% of the area's economy. Around 50% of Dannieh's lands are cultivated. Dannieh is known for its beautiful natural resources, breathtaking landscapes, excellent climate and rich cultural heritage. The mountains are lush green during the summer time and snowcapped in winter. They embrace Kornet el Sawda to the south, the highest peak in the Near East rising at 3,088 m, and Wadi Jouhannam to the north, the deepest valley in Lebanon with 1,150 m depth. The inhabited parts of Dannieh are covered mostly with fruit orchards. Dannieh contains one of the largest underground water reservoirs in Lebanon and the Middle East. More than 200 springs have been identified in the mountains of Dannieh, including Nabaa Al Sukkar in Nemrine, one of the highest springs in Lebanon located at 1,713 m above sea level.

The multiple archeological ruins found in Dannieh demonstrate the passage of several cultures through the region, from the Phoenicians to the Ottomans. Several of the Dannieh villages' names have Semitic roots, which demonstrate their ancient origins.

About the proposed Lazzab Danniye Reserve



About the proposed Lazzab DanniyeH Reserve

Entrances of the reserve

Breissa entrance

Beirut - Tripoli - Bakhaoun - Sir - Nemrine - Breissa (about 2 hours from Beirut)

Trails: Tarik el Ingliz, Arz Najib Agha, El Qorne.

Kfarbnine Entrance

Beirut - Tripoli - Bakhaoun - Sfire - Kfarbnine (about 2 hours from Beirut)

Trails: El Ouyoun, LMT

Qemmamine Entrance (planned entrance under development)

Beirut - Tripoli - Bakhaoun - Sfire - Kfarbnine - Jairoun - Qemmamine (about 2 hours from Beirut)

Beirut - Tripoli - Deir Amar - Bebnine - Berqayel - Qabaait - Qemmamine (about 2.5 hours from Beirut)

Trails: El Maabour, LMT.

Total area of proposed reserve: 23 km²

Village	Total Village Area (km ²)	Area Inside Proposed Nature Reserve (km ²)
Kfarbnine	6.8	3.5 (51%)
Jairoun	13	8.5 (65%)
Qemmamine	3.7	1.3 (35%)
Mrebbine	33.1	8.7 (26%)

Source: <http://www.lazzabdannieh.com>

About Kfarbnine

- Kfarbnine is located in the high east of Danniyeh (Caza)
- Altitude: 1100 m.
- Bordering villages and towns:
 - ✓ West: Jabal Al-Sfireh, Beit Haweek
 - ✓ South: Town of Al-Sfireh and its commons
 - ✓ East: western chain of the mountains of Lebanon (Jabal al-Makmal)
 - ✓ North: Jayroun and Al-Qmamin
- Distance from Tripoli: 32 km
- Distance from Sir El Danniyeh: 12 km
- Distance from Beirut: 112 km
- Distance from Hermel (North Bekaa) through Hermel-Danniyeh road: 46 km
- Distance from Qobayat (Akkar) through Jayroun village: 49 km
- Total area: 683 ha
- Population: 2050 (estimate) as per https://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/كفر_بنين

VII. References

Resources consulted and used in the needs assessment

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<http://dannieh.org/>

<http://www.localiban.org/>

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