

A Road Map Towards a Socioeconomic Development Plan for the Union of Municipalities of Chamal Baalbek, Baalbek–Hermel Governorate



الجمهورية اللبنانية
وزارة الشؤون الاجتماعية

In partnership with the
Ministry of Social Affairs



UN-HABITAT



Ambasciata d'Italia
Beirut

Funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation



AGENZIA ITALIANA
PER LA COOPERAZIONE
ALLO SVILUPPO

A Road Map Towards a Socioeconomic Development Plan for the Union of Municipalities of Chamal Baalbek, Baalbek–Hermel Governorate

Citation format: UN-Habitat Lebanon (2023) *A Road Map Towards a Socioeconomic Development Plan for the Union of Municipalities of Chamal Baalbek, Baalbek–Hermel Governorate*, Beirut: UN-Habitat Lebanon.

Copyright © 2023 UN-Habitat. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means – electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise – without prior permission of UN-Habitat.

Cover photo © Ali Nasserine (2023)



The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is the United Nations agency for human settlements. It is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all. UN-Habitat's programmes are designed to help policymakers and local communities get to grips with human settlements and urban issues and find workable, lasting solutions.

For more information:

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

UN House, 5th Floor, Riad El Solh, Beirut, Lebanon

Tel.: +961 1 978398

Email: unhabitat-lebanon@un.org

Website: www.unhabitat.org/Lebanon



This publication was made possible with the support of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation.

Credits and acknowledgements

This booklet, which outlines strategic directions for the local socioeconomic development of the Union of Municipalities (UoM) of Chamal Baalbek, was made possible with the generous funding support of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), within the scope of the project "Improving Planning Capacities for Social and Economic Local Development" implemented between 2018 and 2023 by the UN-Habitat Lebanon Country Programme in close collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs.

UN-Habitat extends its gratitude to all individuals who participated in and contributed to the preparation and development of this booklet.

UN-Habitat gratefully acknowledges the collaboration of the Minister of Social Affairs and his team, thanking them for their support and close coordination in the field with social development centres (SDCs).

Particular recognition goes to the President of the UoM of Chamal Baalbek, representatives of the union, Baalbek SDC coordinator who supported in the facilitation of data collection, consultation sessions and analysis of the findings, and the members of a dedicated field team who supported in data collection.

Appreciation is also extended to the heads and representatives of municipalities, civil society associations, sports clubs, scouts' groups, and other local entities and community members. UN-Habitat is grateful for their active role and valuable participation in the consultations undertaken leading to the completion of this publication.

Project manager: Lady Habchy

Authors: Mohamad El Dheiby, Sabine Lakkis, Ali Nasseridine

Editors: Alia Chaaban, Nanor Karageozian, Tarek Osseiran

Reviewers: Taina Christiansen, Lady Habchy

Graphic designer: Rachelle Abi Ramia

GIS: Charbel Abou Chakra, Racha Serhal

Foreword by the Ministry of Social Affairs

The continuous fluctuations in the economic landscape in Lebanon have necessitated governmental institutions to rethink the forgoing socioeconomic model, which is based on the philosophy of rapid and temporary crisis response. With the increased pressing needs for social protection, aid and development, this obligates us to work towards meeting the expectations and the needs of the community relying on clear and prudent strategic planning that is realistically aligned with the available resources.

The Ministry of Social Affairs holds the responsibility and commitment of conducting developmental activities at all levels through its social developmental centres (SDCs). The ministry works in close coordination with international organizations, the local community, and local authorities.

Consequently, we seek the engagement and the involvement of relevant parties in our plans and our implementation procedures with the aim to jointly measure, evaluate and report on the performance of the ministry. This confirms our commitment to social responsibility, which contributes to achieving social stability and development.

Hence, we hereby share this booklet with you to present the analysis of data collected – and subsequently validated – with the participation of local stakeholders through different tools, including a survey with municipalities and a series of interviews and focus group discussions. The expected outcome of this exercise is to improve the socioeconomic conditions of communities and those concerned within the specified economic sectors in targeted municipalities and unions of municipalities. This will contribute to securing employment, job opportunities, skills development, and an enabling environment for entrepreneurial activities. This shall be undertaken through proper municipal planning developed in partnership with the SDCs and through the pursuit of possible funding for the implementation of such projects, yet ensuring the collaboration between the Ministry of Social Affairs, civil society organizations, and municipal councils.

Dr. Hector Al-Hajjar
Minister of Social Affairs



Foreword by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation

Knowing and analysing the resources and the challenges of the territory, planning in a participatory manner among public and private sectors and civil society organizations, designing sectorial strategies at local level where local and national level stakeholders are involved and prioritizing the interventions are a milestone before any intervention.

While this booklet is produced, Lebanon is facing one of the most severe economic and social crises: responding to individual needs is crucial, yet introducing reforms based on shared and agreed strategies is fundamental to ensure sustainability avoiding continuous adaption to emergencies.

In this context, the socio-economic focus given in developing the road map of the 10 Unions of Municipalities is really relevant. The adopted approach has enhanced the dialogue among the Unions of Municipalities, the Municipalities, the Social Development Centres of the Ministry Social of Affairs, the Lebanese Non-Governmental Organisations and stakeholders of the private sector.

The road map is the first step of a process towards interventions to be realised in the short-term and others bridging with long-terms strategies, whilst strengthening, orienting, and reforming the existing national systems.

The Italian Cooperation appreciates the role of the Ministry of Social Affairs in facilitating the process in collaboration with UN-Habitat. Italy has a longstanding cooperation with the Ministry in supporting the local development and welfare system for the provision of social services.

Italy looks forward to witnessing the continuity of the undertaken initiative through the concrete actions towards a local economic development.

Ms. Alessandra Piermattei
Head of Office AICS Beirut

Foreword by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme in Lebanon

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is pleased to collaborate with the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs and the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation to present a series of booklets that endeavours to capture the strategic directions of 10 unions of municipalities (UoMs) across Lebanon towards future socioeconomic development action planning. The directions, identified by the UoMs and local stakeholders themselves, through a bottom-up participatory approach, aim to point towards future potential socioeconomic action planning that can both mitigate and set a long-term vision for the response and recovery efforts to address the nationwide socioeconomic crisis at local levels.

At the time of writing, Lebanon continues to face numerous and deep protracted socioeconomic challenges; UoMs and municipalities are at the receiving end of their impact and equally at the forefront of a local response. These booklets compile an evidence base, as identified, and prioritized by UoMs, pointing towards the longer-term need to develop full-fledged socioeconomic action plans that target the needs of their communities across the sectors of health, education, agriculture, infrastructure, among others.

Each booklet provides findings and analyses undertaken by the local teams working at the level of each UoM related to the socioeconomic conditions of each UoM. The data and findings of the booklets were collected through a participatory approach, involving a variety of stakeholders, including the UoMs, municipalities, civil society organizations, academia, the private sector, and the Ministry of Social Affairs' social development centres (SDCs).

The booklets identify the socioeconomic strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities of each UoM, and provide a baseline that can be used to guide further resource investment by UoMs, municipalities and external stakeholders. Culminating with a series of recommendations for each UoM, the booklets provide insight into which specific sectors UoMs should focus on advancing, based on pre-existing efforts made, availability of natural resources, and feasibility. If adopted, these recommendations could help lead to enhanced basic and social service provision, increased livelihood opportunities, and ultimately promote local socioeconomic development and community well-being.

UN-Habitat hopes that these booklets will be a valuable resource for UoMs as they develop and implement future socioeconomic action plans to improve the lives of their communities.

Taina Christiansen
Head of UN-Habitat Lebanon Country Programme

Table of contents

Credits and acknowledgements	3	Overview of the Union of Municipalities (UoM) of Chamal Baalbek.....	16
Foreword by the Ministry of Social Affairs ...	5	Geographical location and land cover/land use	16
Foreword by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation.....	6	Population overview	20
Foreword by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme in Lebanon	7	Basic services: Current state and recommendations for improvement	21
List of tables and figures	9	Water	21
Abbreviations and acronyms.....	9	Roads and transportation	21
Executive summary	10	Buildings and facilities	22
Project overview	11	Electricity.....	22
Project objectives	11	Sanitation and solid waste management..	22
Expected outcomes	11	Telecommunications	23
Timeframe	11	Social services: Current state and recommendations for improvement	23
Geographical coverage.....	11	Health care	23
Beneficiaries	11	Education	23
Methodology	11	Culture and public spaces.....	24
Selection of UoMs.....	12	Local economy and livelihoods: Current state	26
Preparation and training.....	14		
Data collection, analysis, and validation ...	15		

Public sector	26
Private sector	26
Crafts and vocations	27
Agriculture.....	27
Industry	27
Trade.....	27
Remittances from abroad.....	28
Recommendations for sectors identified as key for future local socioeconomic development.....	29
Agriculture.....	30
Tourism	34
Conclusion	39

List of tables and figures

Table 1. 10 UoMs selected under this project	12
Figure 1. Location of 10 UoMs selected under this project	13
Figure 2. Stakeholders involved in the development of booklets as part of the project ..	15
Figure 3. UoM of Chamal Baalbek with its municipalities	16
Figure 4. Digital elevation model (in metres) for the UoM of Chamal Baalbek.....	17
Figure 5. Satellite image of the UoM of Chamal Baalbek	18
Figure 6. Land cover/land use as a percentage of the total area of the UoM of Chamal Baalbek..	19
Figure 7. Land cover/land use within the UoM of Chamal Baalbek.....	19
Figure 8. Distribution of the UoM of Chamal Baalbek's population by age.....	20
Figure 9. Distribution of employment by sector in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek	26

Abbreviations and acronyms

AICS	Italian Agency for Development Cooperation
CNRS-L	National Council for Scientific Research in Lebanon
DEM	Digital elevation model
EDL	Électricité du Liban
GIS	Geographic information system
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
NGO	Non-governmental organization
SDC	Social development centre
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
ToT	Training of trainers
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UoM	Union of municipalities

Executive summary

The preparation of this booklet, which outlines strategic directions of the Union of Municipalities (UoM) of Chamal Baalbek in Baalbek–Hermel Governorate towards future socioeconomic development action planning, was undertaken as part of a series of booklets prepared within the scope of the project “**Improving Planning Capacities for Social and Economic Local Development.**” The project was implemented between 2018 and 2023 by the UN-Habitat Lebanon Country Programme in close collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs and funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS).

The analysis and recommendations included in this booklet are a result of several meetings, interviews, focus group discussions, and brainstorming sessions conducted by the project coordination team, which was composed of representatives of social development centres (SDCs) and UoMs, in addition to a UN-Habitat team.

With the support of a local field team – also composed of representatives of SDCs, UoMs and UN-Habitat – that was involved in data collection, the project coordination team collected and analysed data through fieldwork, which included consultative meetings and technical sessions with all relevant groups: stakeholders, experts, local activists, and individuals from various segments of the local community. The stages of data collection and validation at the local level involved collection of information about the municipalities; conducting consultative meetings, interviews and focus group discussions with stakeholders and representatives of local communities; analysing the collected data through a participatory rapid appraisal approach that defined the status of different sectors; and finally, the representatives of SDCs and UoMs proposing recommendations for specific sectors to help improve the socioeconomic situation in each UoM.

In the UoM of Chamal Baalbek, the consultations showed that the basic and social services are becoming weak due to the ongoing socioeconomic and financial crisis, and most of the sectors have been impacted in a way that the local authorities are not able to operate or to maintain effectively. To be able to improve the socioeconomic situation in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek, local stakeholders recommended to focus on the agriculture and tourism sectors. This was translated into strategic directions and a proposed road map for each of these sectors aimed at providing a vision for future action planning and interventions.

Project overview

Project objectives

The AICS-funded project as part of which this booklet was developed aimed to enhance the socioeconomic development conditions of local communities through strengthening the planning capacities at the level of unions of municipalities (UoMs) and municipalities, and by promoting collaboration between social development centres (SDCs) (affiliated to the Ministry of Social Affairs [MoSA]), local authorities and civil society organizations.

The scope of the project was adapted to meet the emerging needs of the country, to respond to the evolving socioeconomic, financial, and political crises crippling the country since 2019. To this end, the project’s focus shifted from the initial objective of developing full-fledged strategic plans covering all sectors for the targeted UoMs to highlighting mainly strategic directions in some key sectors that can contribute to future local socioeconomic development.

Geographical coverage

- Out of a total of 60 UoMs across all governorates of Lebanon that were invited to partake in the project, 38 responded and expressed initial interest in engaging in subsequent stages of the project to identify strategic directions for their future local socioeconomic development.
- Out of the 38 UoMs, 10 were eventually selected to identify strategic socioeconomic development directions, based on a number of criteria (See “Methodology” section below).

Beneficiaries

- Local communities, including men, women, elderly, youth, children, and people with disabilities
- UoMs
- SDCs
- Civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

Expected outcomes

- Identification of strategic socioeconomic needs and directions for local communities, led by their respective selected UoMs, SDCs and stakeholders active at the local level, to provide a bottom-up evidence base about their socioeconomic status and development opportunities.¹
- Dissemination of the produced evidence base to inform potential projects and secure further investment for their implementation by various internal and external stakeholders.

Timeframe

The project was implemented from 2018 to 2023, during which it was put on hold multiple times during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent socioeconomic crisis.

Methodology

The aim of the series of booklets produced for the 10 targeted UoMs, which this booklet is a part of, is to analyse the local conditions of these unions and study the sectors and services that are essential components within them. These booklets provide a practical framework for taking future steps towards achieving sustainable and balanced development. Thus, the booklet series is the compilation of data and analysis about needs, gaps and challenges identified by the UoMs and other relevant local stakeholders, as well as recommendations that they have outlined to inform strategic socioeconomic development directions for their respective unions. Therefore, the booklets can serve as tools for decision-makers at both the local and national levels, as well as for development agencies to build upon when preparing their national and local programmes and policies. They were hence developed as part of the system-strengthening process of the project for UoMs to start the journey of enhancing their local socioeconomic

¹ As explained in the “Methodology” section below, the project did not aim to produce fully fledged socioeconomic action plans. The booklets developed to summarize the produced evidence base aim to lay the foundation for the future development of such detailed action plans by respective authorities or interested stakeholders.

development planning. The booklets do not intend to present full-fledged strategic socioeconomic action plans; rather they outline the foundational elements and entry points upon which it is hoped that relevant stakeholders can continue building upon to support in future local socioeconomic development action planning efforts.

In consultation with AICS and MoSA coordinators, it was agreed to have the assessment of the UoMs focusing especially on the main productive sectors in each UoM. Hence, each of the booklets includes a general description of the state of basic and social services – the latter focusing on health, education and culture/public spaces – within the respective UoM, in addition to some recommendations for improvement of these services. For the productive sectors, each booklet includes a more detailed analysis of the state of the two sectors that were identified as key for the future local socioeconomic development of the respective UoM, in addition to more detailed recommendations and a proposed road map, based on the data collected and analysed during the field activities and in consultation with local stakeholders.

The assessment and analysis on socioeconomic development issues conducted to develop this booklet series adopted a participatory approach that focused on actively involving local stakeholders in the respective UoMs. Thus, most of the figures presented in the booklets were derived or estimated through data collected and analysed participatively with and by local stakeholders in the UoMs. This bottom-up evidence production process endeavoured to impart local knowledge for the purpose of obtaining an initial baseline regarding certain socioeconomic development matters for the respective UoM. More in-depth assessments will need to be undertaken in the future to further detail and elaborate on the data collected and analysed for the purposes of this booklet series.

In line with this participatory approach, the methodology that was used to develop these booklets included the following components and steps:

Selection of UoMs

1. Representatives of all 60 UoMs in Lebanon were invited to an initial project introductory meeting. Out of the 60, representatives from 54 UoMs attended this meeting, which was held remotely through Microsoft Teams, as initial project mobilization took place during the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Out of these 54 UoMs, 38 submitted “Expressions of Interest” to participate in the subsequent steps of the project. These expressions included the submission of general information about the UoMs and a mapping of existing strategic and/or action plans.
3. Out of the 38 UoMs, 21 were excluded because they had existing relevant plans and programmes supported by various international entities and donors. Out of the remaining 17 UoMs, 10 were eventually selected to develop booklets outlining strategic directions for their future local socioeconomic development, based on a number of criteria, including population density, high number of Syrian refugees, high levels of poverty, low value of annual municipal budgets, and limited or no previous financial support from donors.² Having UoMs represented from across all Lebanese governorates was also a criterion of selection. The 10 targeted UoMs include:

Akkar Governorate	North Governorate	Mount Lebanon Governorate	Bekaa Governorate	Baalbek–Hermel Governorate	South Governorate	Nabatiyeh Governorate
Joumeih	Caza Zgharta	Jord El-Aala–Bhamdoun	Qalaat El-Istiqlal	Chamal Baalbek	Caza Jezzine	Iqlim El-Tuffah
Jord El-Qaytaa		Chouf El-Souayjani				
		Iqlim El-Kharroub El-Chamali				

Table 1. 10 UoMs selected under this project.

² This information was collected mainly through the information sheets that UoMs had previously submitted as part of the “Expression of Interest” phase explained above. Some information – mainly related to other financial support from donors – was also based on the knowledge of UN-Habitat area coordinators, as part of their regular work with UoMs.

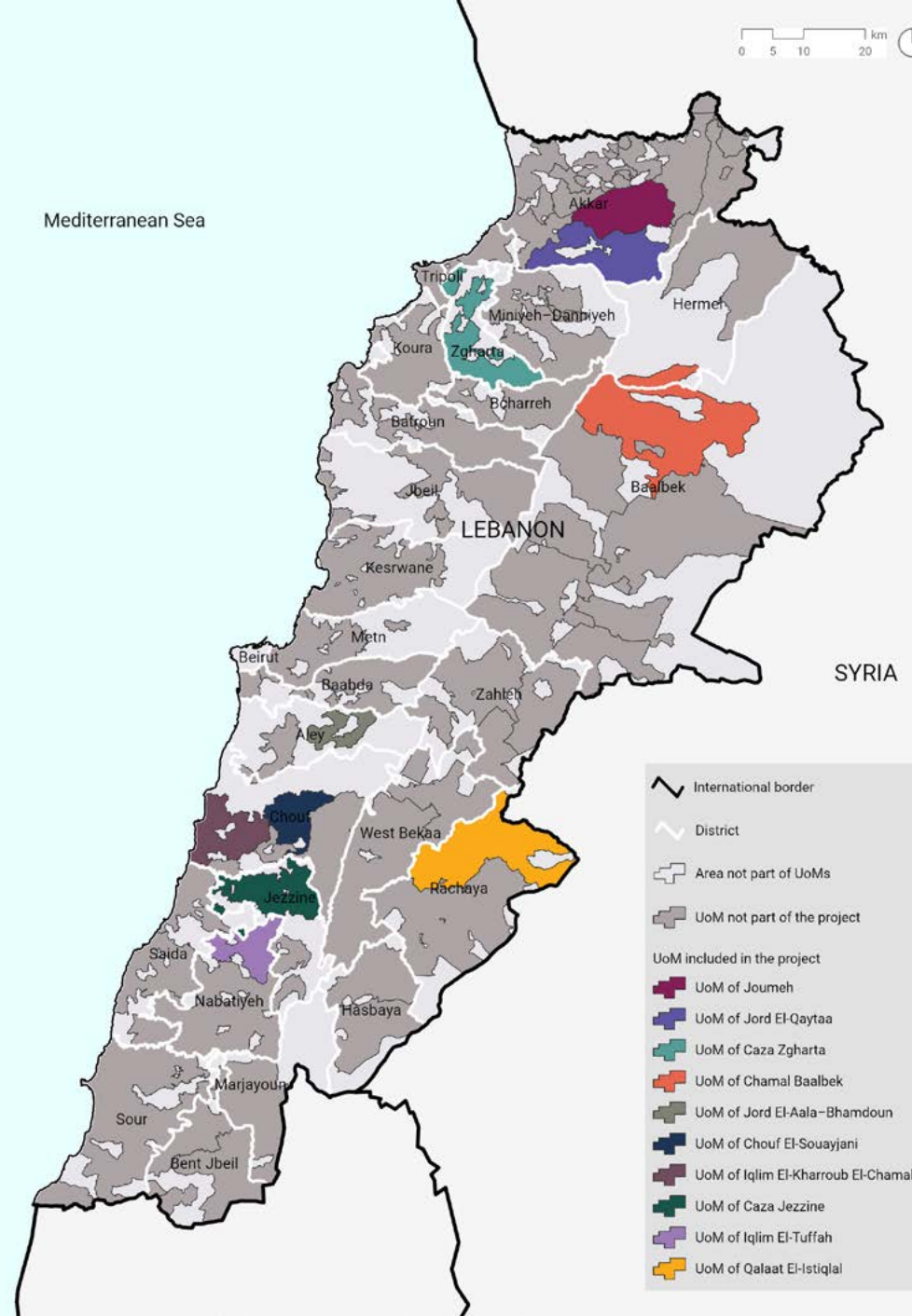


Figure 1. Location of 10 UoMs selected under this project. Source: UN-Habitat (2023).

Preparation and training

1. A project coordination team – consisting of 7 SDC coordinators designated by MoSA,³ 11 representatives⁴ from 10 UoMs, and 8 UN-Habitat staff members – was established to lead, implement and monitor project activities and progress (Figure 2).
2. Besides the project coordination team, 10 field teams were established for each of the 10 UoMs, consisting of 10–12 individuals representing municipalities, associations, organizations, cooperatives, clubs, and educational establishments active in their respective UoM (Figure 2). Their role was to assist in collecting information related to each municipality within their respective UoM, participate in extensive consultations, and in general guide and support field-based activities.
3. A detailed training curriculum on life and technical skills was developed by UN-Habitat to conduct workshops for the project coordination team at UoM level (representatives of participating UoMs/municipalities, SDCs and UN-Habitat). In addition, survey questionnaires and templates were developed in Arabic for data collection.
4. Based on the developed training curriculum, the following workshops were conducted between 2019 and 2023:
 - One workshop was conducted to develop the soft skills of the members of the project coordination team, including on communication techniques, community mobilization approaches, meeting moderation techniques, and public speaking techniques. This included the use of a broad range of communication tools, tips and guidelines.
 - One workshop was conducted to develop the planning capacity of the members of the project coordination team, in terms of developing and rolling out the participatory field assessments, including on constituting a representative field team, undertaking stakeholder mapping exercises, etc. Participants were trained on the use of tools and templates, including different diagrams, to outline the criteria for the creation of field teams, and their respective roles.
 - Four workshops were conducted to develop the capacity of the members of the project coordination team through regular coaching and training of trainers (ToT). Topics included the following: initiating and maintaining contacts with local community stakeholders, undertaking primary and secondary data collection, documenting key gathered information and data, and carrying out data analysis. During these workshops, multiple tools were developed together with the field teams, including, among others: a municipal survey questionnaire; field assessment checklists; forms to record field observations and remarks; protocols and guidance for conducting focus group discussions and key informant interviews; problem tree analysis tool; strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis, etc.
 - Ten workshops were conducted to develop the capacity of field teams to use templates and tools to help facilitate the local stakeholders in their respective UoM to set the UoM's vision, identify its strategic directions, and prepare road maps for prioritized strategic directions and sectors for the UoM to focus on.



³ Representing each of the seven governorates covered by the project.

⁴ All UoMs nominated one representative for the project, except for the UoM of Jord El-Qaytaa, which nominated two representatives as focal points at the request of the union's president.

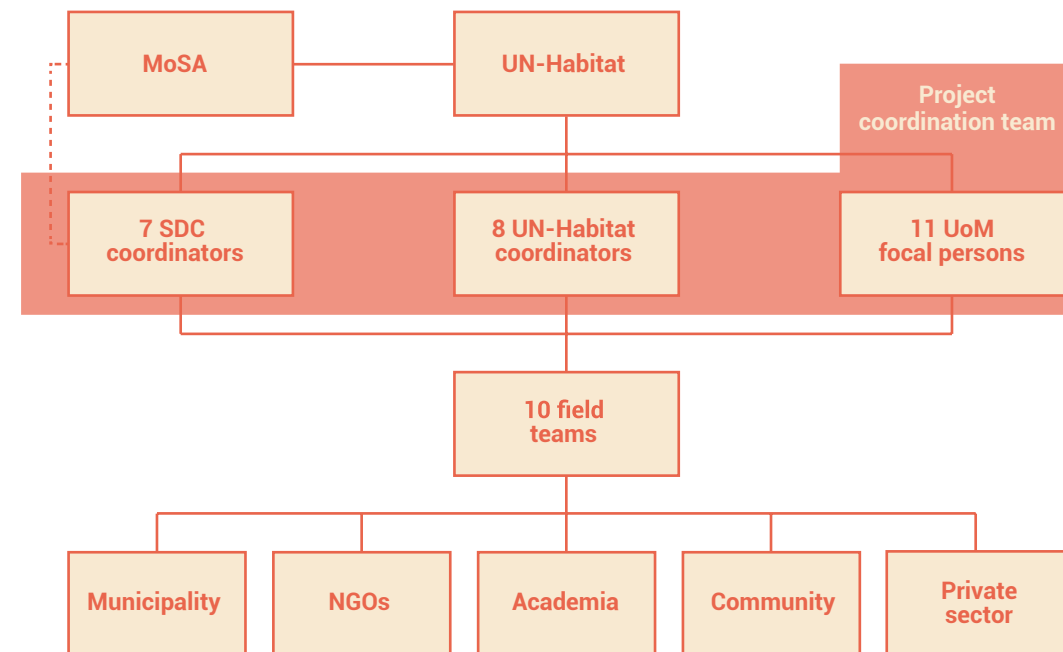


Figure 2. Stakeholders involved in the development of booklets as part of the project.

Data collection, analysis, and validation

1. Following the workshops, survey questionnaires were filled with each of the 142 municipalities that are part of the 10 targeted UoMs. The surveys aimed to gather general information about municipalities under the 10 UoMs (e.g. population, resources, projects).
2. After filling the surveys, the project coordination team conducted 52 focus group discussions, 61 consultative sessions, and 20 individual meetings with UoM presidents. The purpose of these activities was to collect additional data from different relevant stakeholders and to discuss the situation and challenges of different sectors in the UoMs.
3. Following data collection, the project coordination team met several times to analyse the general local context as well as the services and sectors of each UoM, using the participatory rapid appraisal methodology.⁵ Strategic directions were thus formulated to support and enhance the socioeconomic status of each union. Additionally, strengths, weaknesses and available opportunities within all sectors were assessed. Depending on the existing resources and opportunities within each UoM, specific sectors were identified in each UoM, for which clear future directions were defined.
4. With regard to maps included in the booklets, the UN-Habitat Geographic Information Systems (GIS) team supported in the production of a set of general maps for each of the booklets to depict the context, topography and land cover/land use of each UoM. The GIS team also updated the boundaries of the UoMs based on their municipal composition. This was done based on available data from the survey with municipalities, open sources, and other relevant secondary data sources.

Based on the data collected and analysed, a booklet was produced for each of the 10 UoMs, including identified and proposed strategic directions and priority interventions. Thus, 10 UoMs successfully participated in the entire process, resulting in supporting and enhancing their capacities in setting strategic directions focused on socioeconomic needs, with a view to identify evidence-based entry points to enhance the socioeconomic conditions of mainly vulnerable areas affected by the multiple crises.

⁵ Participatory rapid appraisal is a learning process that empowers people to conduct their own analysis to create the information base they need for participatory planning and action.

Overview of the Union of Municipalities (UoM) of Chamal Baalbek

Geographical location and land cover/land use

Located in Baalbek–Hermel Governorate, the UoM of Chamal Baalbek consists of 14 municipalities (Figure 3). The size of the municipal councils of the 14 municipalities varies; some have 9 members (Jabbouleh, Wadi Faara, Qlaileh–Harfouch, Qarha, Zabboud), others have 12 members (Toufiqiyeh, Ram–Joubbaniyeh, Halabta), and others have 15 members (El-Ain, Chaat, Laboueh, Nabi Osmane, Harabta, Nabha Ed-Damdoum).

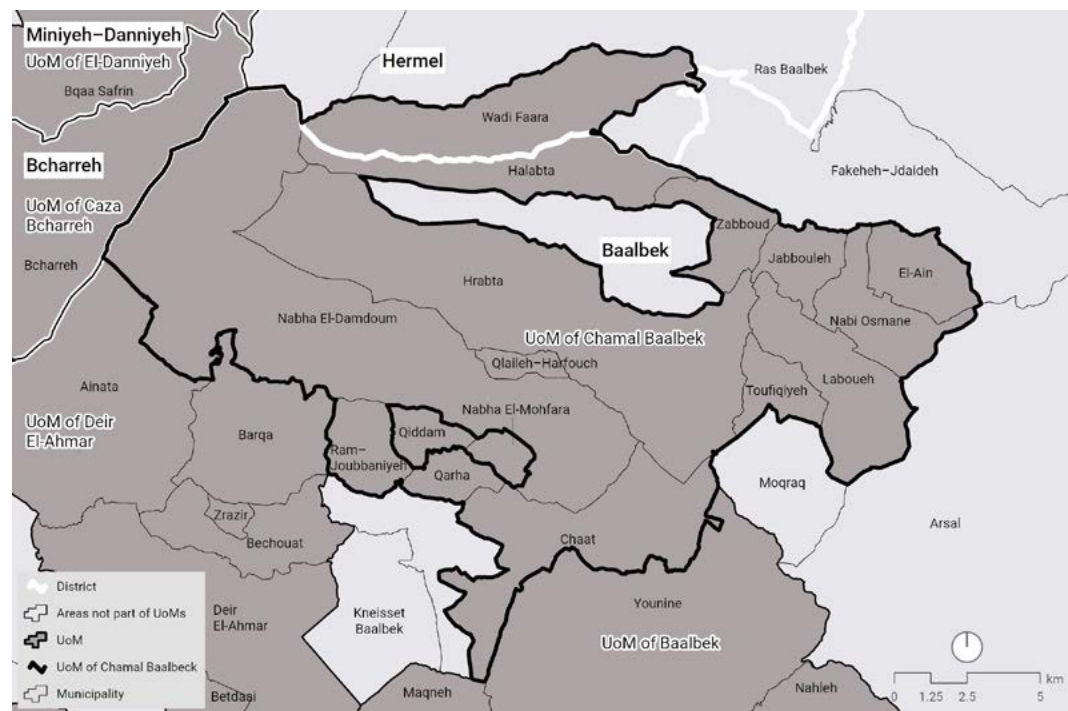


Figure 3. UoM of Chamal Baalbek with its municipalities. Source: UN-Habitat (2023). The boundaries of the UoM of Chamal Baalbek based on its municipal composition were updated by the UN-Habitat GIS team, based on available data from the survey with the municipalities, open sources, and other relevant secondary data sources.

The total area of the UoM is approximately 291 square kilometres. Its elevation varies from around 807 metres above sea level – in the areas where the villages are situated in the plain alongside the international road from Homs (Syria) to Baalbek (Toufiqiyeh, Nabi Osmane, El-Ain, Laboueh, and Chaat) – to an elevation of over 3,000 meters at the borders adjacent to the highlands of the UoM of Bcharreh. The elevation in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek reaches up to 1,400 metres in the mountainous villages (Halabta and Harabta).

The UoM of Chamal Baalbek is distinguished by its geographical location between the Eastern and Western Lebanon Mountain ranges, as it sits within the closest distance separating the two. The union's towns cross the international road linking Syria to Lebanon from the north-eastern side. The union is bordered to the east by the town of Aarsal, to the west by Caza Bcharreh and the towns of Barqa and Ainata, to the north by Caza Hermel and the town of Fakeheh, and to the south by the town of Younine.

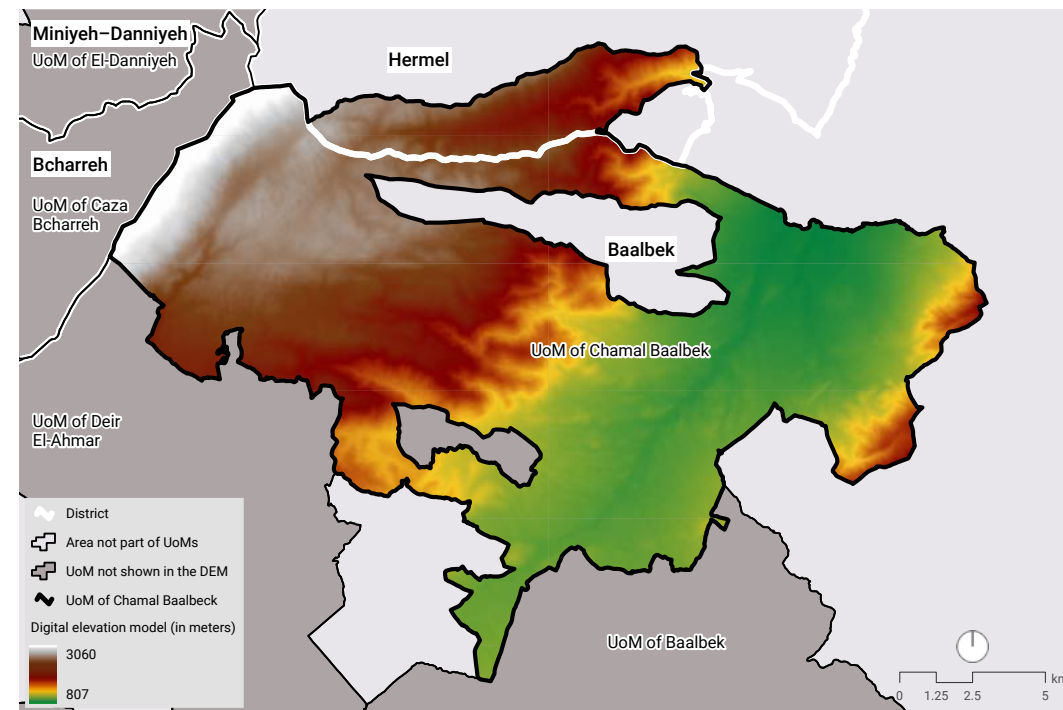


Figure 4. Digital elevation model (in metres) for the UoM of Chamal Baalbek. Source: UN-Habitat (2023). Digital elevation model (DEM) taken from the Advanced Spaceborne Thermal Emission and Reflection Radiometer (ASTER) Global Digital Elevation Model Version 3 (GDEM V3), with a spatial resolution of 30 metres, downloaded from the United States Geological Survey (USGS) <https://lpdaac.usgs.gov/products/astgtmv003/>.



The UoM is also characterized by its wide geographical area, where fertile lands and plains abound. This region, renowned for its relatively pristine air quality, serves as a safe passage for migratory birds.

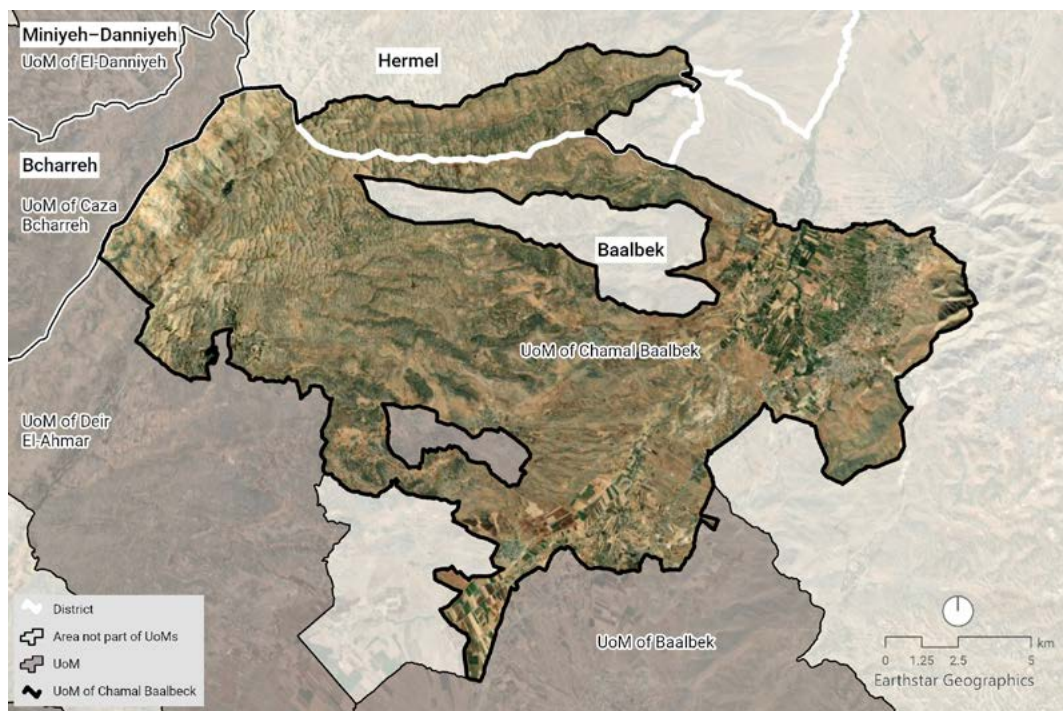


Figure 5. Satellite image of the UoM of Chamal Baalbek. Source: UN-Habitat (2023). The high-resolution satellite image displayed in this map was extracted from Esri online World Imagery.

Wooded lands cover 50 per cent (146.57 km²) of the total area of the union, while agricultural areas span 25 per cent (74.54 km²) and unproductive areas (unused plots) make up 20 per cent (57.67 km²).

Artificial areas account for 3.41 per cent (9.93 km²), and a very small percentage of the total area is covered by water bodies and grasslands (Figures 6 and 7).⁶

⁶ The figures are based on the land cover/land use classification system level 1, calculated by the National Center for Remote Sensing in the National Council for Scientific Research in Lebanon (CNRS-L) in 2017. According to that classification, the category “artificial areas” includes urban areas (urban fabric), activity areas (industrial or commercial area, port area, airport), non-built-up areas (dumpsites, landfills, urban extension and/or construction site, urban vacant land), and artificial, non-agricultural vegetated areas (green urban area, and sports and leisure facilities). “Agricultural areas” include field crops, permanent crops, intensive agriculture, and agricultural units. “Wooded land” includes dense wooded land, clear wooded land, scrubland, and burned wooded land. “Grassland” includes both dense and clear grassland. “Unproductive areas” include bare rocks, bare soils, beaches, and dunes.

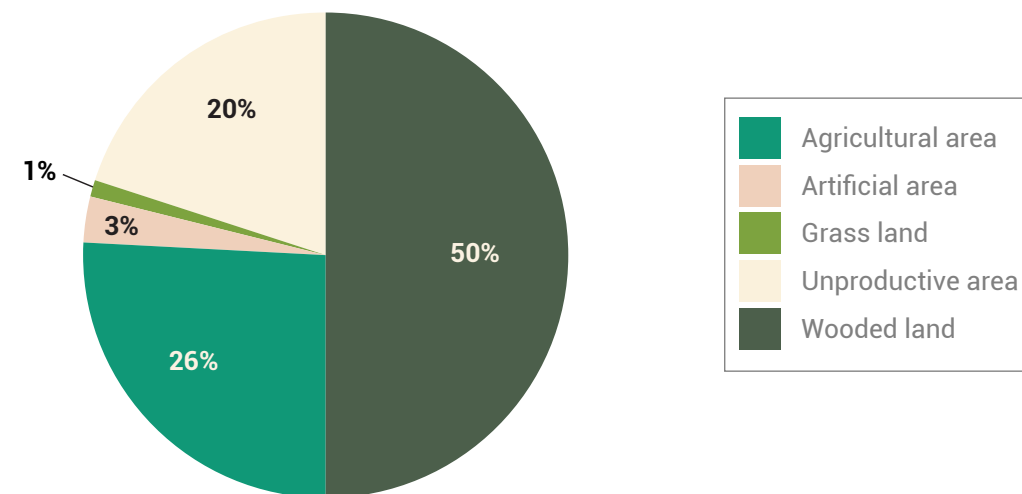


Figure 6. Land cover/land use as a percentage of the total area of the UoM of Chamal Baalbek. Source: Calculation made by UN-Habitat (2023) based on the Land Cover/Land Use Map of Lebanon, scale 1:20000, Classification System Level 1, National Center for Remote Sensing, CNRS-L (2017).

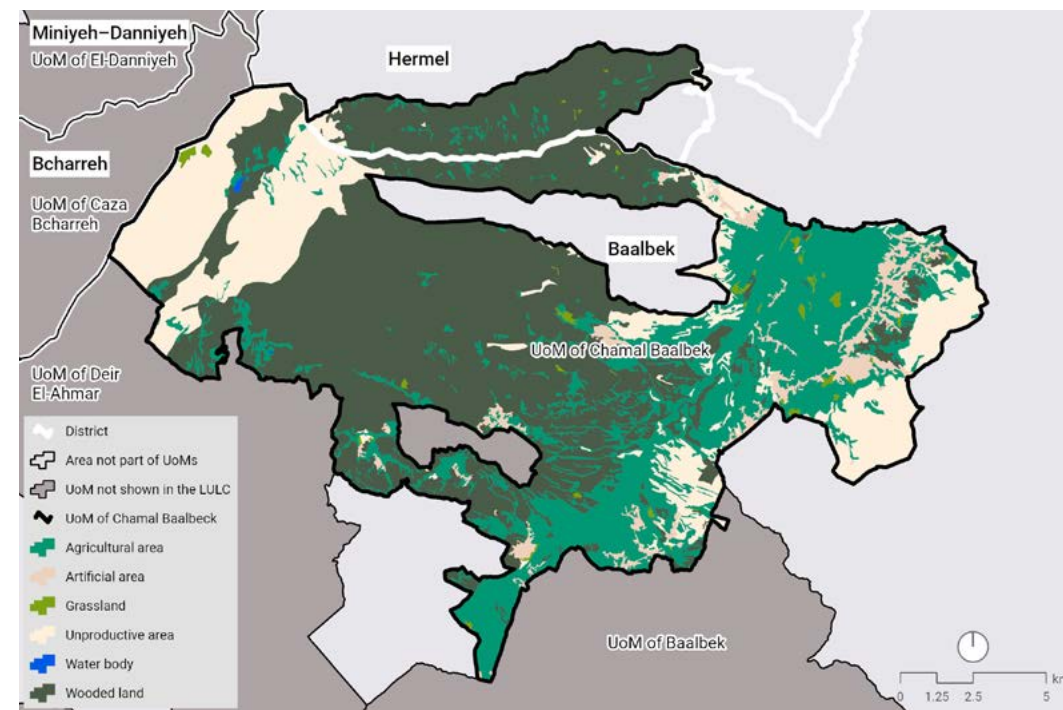


Figure 7. Land cover/land use within the UoM of Chamal Baalbek. Source: UN-Habitat (2023), adapted from Land Cover/Land Use Map of Lebanon, scale 1:20000, Classification System Level 1, National Center for Remote Sensing, CNRS-L (2017).

Population overview

The total population of the UoM of Chamal Baalbek is approximately 76,000, with non-Lebanese (mostly Syrian refugees) constituting around 24 per cent, according to surveys conducted with the 14 municipalities of the union. Syrian refugees live in collective shelters, and in 19 informal tented settlements distributed within the towns of the union.

The population of the UoM of Chamal Baalbek is characterized by a relatively high percentage of children and youth, accounting collectively for over 60 per cent of the total population, according to the survey filled by the municipalities' mayors (Figure 8).

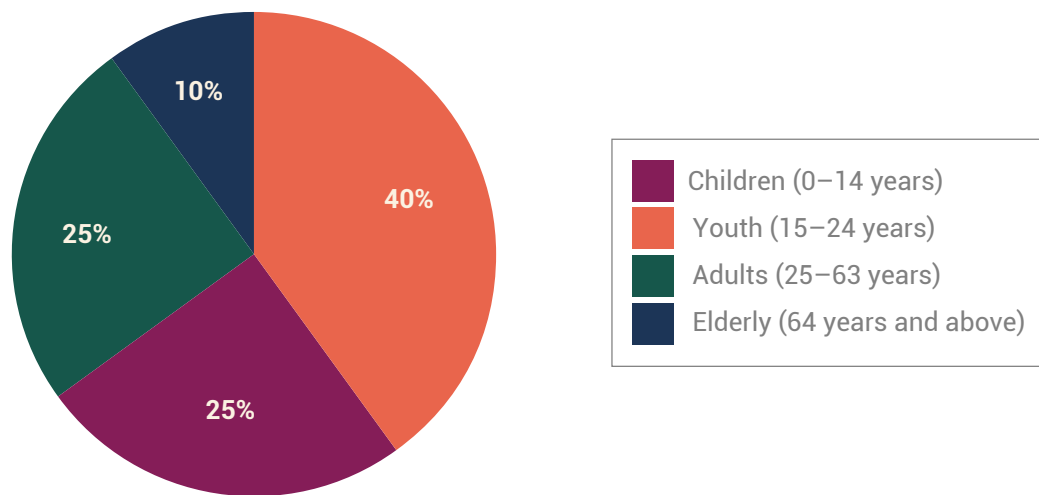


Figure 8. Distribution of the UoM of Chamal Baalbek's population by age. *Source:* Survey conducted with municipalities.

Only around 3 per cent of the registered population in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek live outside of Lebanon – in the African continent in small numbers, in the Arabian Gulf (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait), Australia, the United States of America, and Romania – according to the survey conducted with the 14 municipalities of the union. The process of emigration began

at the start of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975 and has increased recently due to the ongoing economic crisis. Some expatriates support their families and relatives residing in the union through regular remittances, which helps these families overcome the financial challenges caused by the ongoing economic and financial crisis in the country.

Basic services: Current state and recommendations for improvement

The state of basic services in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek is considered acceptable, as all services are available, although to varying degrees among sectors and municipalities. Like the rest of Lebanon, the quality and quantity of basic services have deteriorated due to the ongoing socioeconomic and financial crisis, affecting service provision and maintenance, due to the lack of ability of local authorities to cover operational and maintenance costs.

Water

The primary water source in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek is supplied by springs, such as the Laboueh Spring, and rivers, such as Jabbouleh River, as well as private wells in the UoM towns. The drinking water and irrigation networks in the union are old and worn out and require rehabilitation and maintenance. Given the increase in population and urban expansion, these networks no longer meet the needs of residents, as their capacity has become weak.

In addition, water reaches homes intermittently due to power outages. Municipalities incur high costs to provide water to residents due to the high prices of fuel needed to operate the generators that are used to fill tanks from public ground wells affiliated with the Bekaa Water Establishment, which supervises water distribution with the municipalities concerned. These wells are operated and financed by municipal funds.

Within this context, local stakeholders engaged in the project argued that it is necessary to rehabilitate water networks and provide new energy sources to permanently provide water to homes. They recommended the use of solar energy photovoltaic (PV) systems to provide uninterrupted power for the water wells located in the municipalities.

Local stakeholders also emphasized the need to improve monitoring by local administrations and the relevant ministry to preserve and protect groundwater from pollution. This can be achieved through regular examination of well and spring water. Furthermore, regular maintenance of irrigation and rainwater channels was considered as crucial to protect them from contamination with untreated water.

Moreover, local stakeholders argued that efforts should be directed towards reducing excessive water extraction, which has led to the drying up of many springs in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek. These springs used to provide drinking water for residents and free irrigation water for crops. This situation has significantly contributed to the collapse of the agricultural sector in the region, where irrigation costs now constitute more than half of the total agricultural production cost, according to information received during a consultation meeting with local stakeholders (See "Agriculture" subsection under the "Local Economy and Livelihoods: Current State" section below for more information about this sector).

Roads and transportation

The condition of the international road connecting many towns in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek is generally acceptable, but maintenance is required in certain sections. As for the primary and secondary roads within the municipalities of the union, they are in poor condition and need rehabilitation and new paving, especially the secondary ones. It is worth noting that some towns still have unpaved roads, hindering residents' mobility, especially since several roads inside some municipalities are internal and not connected by main roads. Additionally, almost all roads suffer from insufficient lighting due to the capacities of the municipalities to do maintenance of streetlights, in addition to the continuous power outages. Moreover, many roads lack the minimum traffic safety conditions, with no markings, speed limit signs, and other necessary signage. Furthermore, public transportation is absent in the union; thus, residents rely on private cars and other vehicles.

Therefore, local stakeholders engaged in this project considered it essential to enhance traffic safety on roads and ensure their maintenance, as well as provide nighttime street lighting – such as through the installation of solar-powered streetlights – to preserve the security of towns and the safety of their residents. They argued that such efforts could contribute to local economic and social development.

Buildings and facilities

For aesthetic purposes, the majority of buildings in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek villages and towns do not exceed two floors. As in other parts of the country, in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek, there are residential buildings and other structures are often illegally constructed on public land. Some constructions are found on lands designated as state-owned. This is primarily due to the absence of effective zoning plans in the union, coupled with a lack of adherence to guidance plans.

One general recommendation made by local stakeholders who participated in the project was that municipalities and the UoM could limit the unplanned urban sprawl through the development and implementation of a proper master plan that covers the whole UoM.

Electricity

The towns and villages of the UoM of Chamal Baalbek are covered by the public electricity network, which is relatively well-maintained and extends to all households. However, it falls short of meeting residents' needs due to frequent power outages and its insufficient capacity, as in other parts of the country. These issues are related to heightened consumption, particularly linked to increased number of population in the UoM following the start of the war in Syria, coupled with encroachments leading to recurrent network malfunctions and tensions among residents.

Despite being subject to such constant disruptions, public electricity remains a significant source of energy for households. However, alternative energy sources, such as private generators and solar energy systems, constitute vital household energy providers

too. The escalating fuel prices impose additional financial burdens on both residents and municipalities related to securing energy.

Therefore, local stakeholders who participated in the project considered it essential to improve the state of the electricity networks, along with other basic services, such as through the supply of additional transformers.

In addition, they emphasized the opportunities offered through harnessing wind energy. The union experiences consistent wind patterns throughout the year, a result of its close proximity to the Eastern and Western Lebanon Mountain ranges. This favours the installation of wind turbines in the union, which could help provide a sustainable solution to the energy challenges faced by residents.

Sanitation and solid waste management

Sanitation networks are absent in all the towns within the union, with households relying on cesspits. The situation is further complicated by the presence of Syrian refugee informal tented settlements which housing them lack adequate sanitation networks. Cesspits are emptied into locations distant from homes, resulting in the pollution of soil and groundwater sources. Besides environmental implications, this situation poses health-related threats to residents' well-being due to the contamination of springs and groundwater wells, in addition to having economic consequences linked to the negative impact it has on the quality of agricultural products.

As for solid waste management, residents of the UoM of Chamal Baalbek face challenges due to the presence of unplanned dumpsites in the union, an upsurge in waste during the summer, and the use of burning and dumping as disposal methods. This has led to conflicts between towns regarding the placement of landfills within their geographic boundaries.

Therefore, local stakeholders who participated in the project considered that it is imperative to focus on establishing a sewage network in the union, guided by scientific studies

and adhering to health and environmental standards. Concurrently, the construction of appropriate treatment plants was emphasized. This would involve discontinuing the use of cesspits and reassessing the wastewater infrastructure within Syrian refugee informal tented settlements to align with health and environmental norms.

In addition, local stakeholders argued that there is a pressing need to develop a comprehensive solid waste management plan. This plan should emphasize source separation, the establishment of a processing facility, and the creation of an environmentally compliant sanitary landfill.

Social services: Current state and recommendations for improvement

Health care

Health services in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek are provided through four health dispensaries, two of which are private facilities (a mobile clinic operated by the Islamic Health Association and a primary health-care centre) and the other two are public ones (SDCs affiliated with MoSAs), facing reduced services due to the ongoing economic crisis. Additionally, the union is served by 10 pharmacies and 15 medical clinics. However, the sole primary health-care centre in Laboueh falls short of addressing all health needs of residents.

The health-care centres within the union offer medical services, first aid, imaging, laboratory tests, and medications, albeit having insufficient capacities. Operational costs are covered through self-generated revenues and occasional assistance from certain NGOs and donor entities.

The UoM of Chamal Baalbek lacks both private and public hospitals, and notably, there is no Lebanese Red Cross centre within the union. Residents rely on hospital services provided by governmental hospitals in Baalbek and Hermel.

Thus, local stakeholders in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek identified the need to support and

Telecommunications

Cellular and internet services in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek fall short of meeting the residents' needs due to the absence of transmission towers covering all neighbourhoods within the towns of the union. Furthermore, the lack of maintenance capacity during malfunctions and the recurrent power outages affecting the stations contribute to the suboptimal service quality.

Municipalities and UoMs have no control on this sector, which is run by the central government through the Ministry of Telecommunications.

empower existing health-care facilities in the union through availing specialized medical staff, necessary equipment, and a stock of both regular and chronic medications to meet the required health-care needs of the population. In this context, they also considered it necessary to facilitate transportation within and outside the union, enabling access to health-care services at lower cost.

Education

The condition of the education sector in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek is generally considered satisfactory in comparison to other sectors. The union boasts a total of 15 schools, encompassing both public and private institutions, providing coverage across all educational stages. Three of these institutions are public secondary schools.

Despite having an adequate number of school buildings, there is a significant distance between the schools and many residential areas, particularly affecting the secondary stage and resulting in increased transportation costs for families. There is a pressing need for the rehabilitation, equipping, and construction of the buildings of the existing schools, especially for the secondary stage, as the existing facilities

struggle to accommodate the large number of students, especially in public schools.

Maintenance activities in public schools are funded by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, often in collaboration with international organizations through the schools' fund boxes. These efforts are supervised by teachers appointed by the ministry. Meanwhile, private schools are managed and maintained by their respective management councils.

In terms of academic achievements and official certificates, private institutions, especially at the primary level, surpass the success rate of passed students from the public ones, primarily due to the lack of state attention to the latter. However, the scenario shifts significantly at the secondary level, with the success rate in official exams in public secondary schools exceeding 90 per cent.

as essential steps. Equipping this institute with the necessary facilities and laboratories is also considered as important.

Culture and public spaces

The UoM of Chamal Baalbek lacks public parks and secure spaces for relaxation, recreation, walking, and sports activities for all age groups.

Therefore, local stakeholders noted the need to work on providing safe spaces in the union, which could help mitigate the psychological impacts of the severe crises on local communities, among other benefits.

Additionally, it was recommended that efforts are undertaken to enhance the role of municipalities in supporting and empowering associations and clubs, involving them in funding and implementing cultural and social initiatives in the union, particularly addressing the needs of young people. The focus should not only be on physical spaces but also on fostering an environment that encourages social interaction, cultural engagement, and recreational activities. Moreover, supporting associations, especially scout associations, will contribute to the overall vibrancy and resilience of the union, as argued by stakeholders. Considering the economic challenges faced by local associations, supporting them financially was highlighted by stakeholders.

Within this context, local stakeholders engaged in the project argued that efforts are required to support public schools by maintaining and rehabilitating their buildings, providing necessary equipment, improving conditions for distance learning, ensuring fair distribution of teachers among schools, and establishing an academic training centre for teachers. The construction of new school buildings, especially for the secondary level, was also mentioned. In addition, activating the cultural libraries in municipalities and creating a public library that benefits students and other interested community members are regarded



© Ali Nasseridine (2023)

Local economy and livelihoods: Current state

This section provides an overview of the key local economy and livelihood challenges and needs in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek, with a particular focus on the agriculture and tourism sectors, which have been identified through fieldwork and the outcomes of meetings and discussions with relevant parties to provide real opportunities to drive the process of socioeconomic development forward in the union. Recommendations to improve these two sectors will be presented separately in the next section.

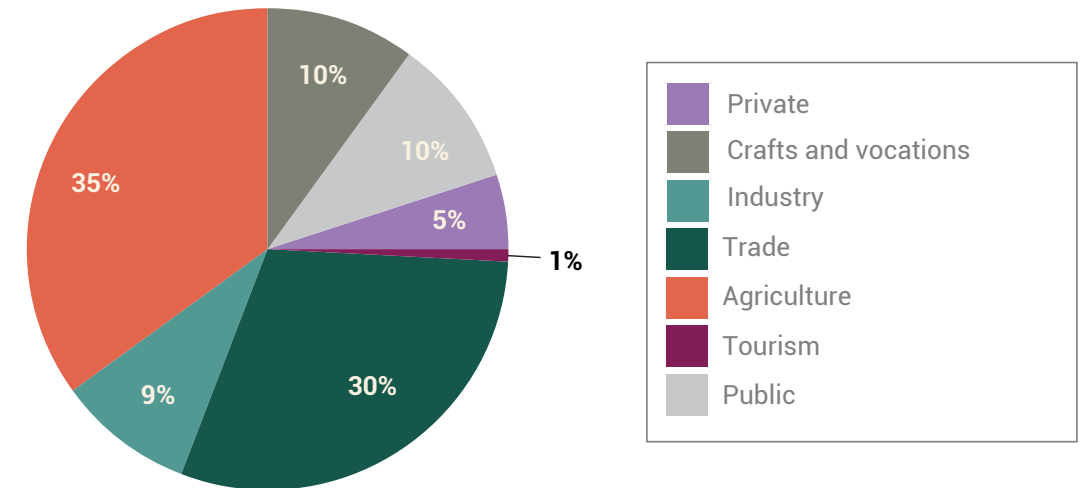


Figure 9. Distribution of employment by sector in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek. Source: Survey conducted with municipalities.

Public sector

Approximately 10 per cent of the workforce in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek is employed in the public sector, according to the survey conducted with municipalities in the union (Figure 9), indicating that it does not serve as a primary income source for residents. In terms of age distribution, 60 per cent of public sector employees are young (18–35) and the remaining 40 per cent are older individuals. In terms of gender distribution, 70 per cent are males and 30 per cent are females.

Public sector employees in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek work in various institutions, including military, Internal Security Forces, general security, and state security. Others work in the education sector, municipalities, and other governmental agencies. The institutions are either located within the union's municipalities or outside of the union; in the latter case,

employees need to incur an additional financial burden related to transportation to and from their job locations.

Private sector

Approximately 5 per cent of the workforce in the union is engaged in the private sector, according to the survey conducted with municipalities in the union (Figure 9). It encompasses employment in various institutions, such as private schools, companies, restaurants and other establishments situated either within or outside the union's towns. In terms of the gender distribution in the private sector workforce, 80 per cent of employees are males, and 20 per cent are females, while in terms of age groups, 75 per cent are young (18–35), and 25 per cent are older individuals.

Crafts and vocations

Approximately 10 per cent of the total workforce in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek is employed in the crafts and vocations sector, according to the survey conducted with municipalities in the union (Figure 9). The majority (70 per cent) of these workers are young (18–35), while the remaining 30 per cent are older individuals. In terms of gender distribution, 65 per cent are males, and 35 per cent are females. Their employment spans various fields, including construction-related activities (such as painting, tiling, electrical repairs and plumbing), as well as involvement in the food industry and home-based crafts.

Agriculture

The agriculture sector serves as a primary income source for families in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek, employing approximately 35 per cent of the workforce (Figure 9), according to the survey conducted with municipalities in the union, with variations among different towns.

Agricultural lands span around 49 km². The union is renowned for its diverse crops (including wheat, grains, apples, olives), as well as beekeeping and thriving livestock farming –within the union, and the presence of two agricultural cooperatives from which a large number of farmers benefit.

The agriculture sector in the union faces multifaceted challenges. Farmers encounter different obstacles, such as the escalating costs of seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, coupled with high operational expenses for irrigation, harvesting, packaging and marketing. Climate change and delayed rainfall contribute to the drying up of springs, adversely affecting both the quality and production of agricultural crops.

The ongoing economic crisis has amplified these challenges, resulting in soaring prices for agricultural machinery parts, seeds, animal feed, medicines and fertilizers. The need for alternative energy sources to mitigate the impact of constant power outages on irrigation has become increasingly apparent.

In addition, agricultural markets struggle to effectively market and export produce, leading to a stagnation in certain productions. The sector grapples with additional hurdles, including the absence of a comprehensive agricultural

crops calendar, inadequate facilities for food industries, and a lack of refrigeration for storage.

Land reclamation is hindered by complex issues, such as land inheritance disputes and the fragmentation of large properties. Administrative inefficiencies further impede the completion of land transactions and registrations.

Disparities exist among towns in terms of irrigation water availability, with some facing water scarcity, resulting in the desertification of agricultural lands. Furthermore, the continued use of earthen irrigation channels contributes to significant water wastage. Unauthorized encroachments on water sources by the population add to the challenges, leading to pollution of certain water sources.

Industry

Approximately 9 per cent of the residents in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek are employed in the industry sector, including both Lebanese and some Syrian workers, according to the survey conducted with municipalities in the union (Figure 9). The union is particularly known for its thriving industries, such as tile manufacturing, sidewalk tile manufacturing aluminium manufacturing, French-style ironwork, and carpentry. In the union, small-scale factories demonstrate expertise in producing a variety of food products, including cheese, other dairy products, olive oil, and homemade molasses.

However, the industry sector encounters challenges due to the limited availability of essential raw materials, most of which are imported. Furthermore, the sector is significantly impacted by the persistent lack of electricity and alternative energy sources, particularly amid the ongoing fuel crisis and the resulting surge in prices. This has led to a decline in overall income and subsequently increased unemployment rates. Non-organized foreign labour poses strong competition to the local workforce, often operating informally and receiving lower wages. Additionally, workers in the industry sector often lack access to any form of health coverage.

Trade

The trade sector plays a vital role in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek, employing over 30 per cent of the total workforce (Figure 9), according to the

survey conducted with municipalities in the union. It encompasses various trades, including shops selling food products, clothing, footwear, construction materials, and electronic tools, as well as fuel stations.

However, this sector faces notable challenges, such as the limited capital of some traders, a decline in residents' purchasing power, and the geographical distance of the union from the main cities such as Baalbek, Zahle, Chtoura and Beirut, resulting in substantial transportation costs. Additionally, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was significant, leading to the closure of several commercial establishments and adversely affecting the overall business landscape within the union.

Tourism

The tourism sector does not constitute a significant source of income for residents in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek. Its activities are mainly limited to hunting, attracting hunters from various regions of Lebanon. Additionally, there

are some religious shrines and natural springs in the union. This sector employs approximately 1 per cent of the workforce, according to the survey conducted with municipalities in the union (Figure 9).

The tourism sector faces challenges due to the lack of public transportation in the towns of the union, which adds further financial burdens on visitors. Moreover, the union lacks tourism facilities, guesthouses, restaurants and cafes.

Remittances from abroad

According to the survey with the municipalities, remittances from abroad constitute approximately 2 per cent of the residents' income sources in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek (Figure 9), supporting some families with essential living expenses and thus significantly contributing to improving their quality of life, especially amid the ongoing economic crisis. The expatriate community is diverse in terms of economic background; a few expatriates are well-off, while others are self-sufficient.



Recommendations for sectors identified as key for future local socioeconomic development

Based on the consultative meetings and workshops held with representatives from municipalities within the UoM of Chamal Baalbek, there was consensus on adopting the following vision for local socioeconomic development:

“Chamal Baalbek: an area with a clean environment, rich in its agricultural and industrial production, and a vivid community of vibrant inhabitants and visitors.”

To achieve this vision, it was recommended that municipalities, civil society organizations, and the private sector must come together, along with local communities, working collaboratively to foster local socioeconomic development, based on the union's assets and available opportunities. According to the results of the process followed during the project within the UoM of Chamal Baalbek, it was suggested that there should be a focus on developing the agriculture and tourism sectors due to the available human, natural and material resources that can be harnessed and enhanced.

Working towards achieving agriculture and tourism development necessitates creating a road map for each sector (see the subsections “Proposed Agriculture Sector Road Map” and “Proposed Tourism Sector Road Map” below) that includes multiple stages to be implemented within a logical timeframe and according to the availability of funding. The road map for both the agriculture and tourism sectors was envisioned to encompass strategic interventions linked to four key factors or aspects:

1. Infrastructure
2. Existing institutional framework
3. Natural resources
4. Local human resources

The below section includes an overview of the identified strategic directions for the available productive sectors within the UoM of Chamal Baalbek, with a focus on the agriculture and tourism sectors, both of which present opportunities for sound local socioeconomic development. These directions have been identified and proposed based on the analysis of the existing situation of these sectors presented in the previous section, which relied on information provided from different local stakeholders through a participatory approach.

As for other sectors (such as industry, trade, and crafts and vocations), they will certainly continue to play a role in the socioeconomic development of cities and towns of the UoM of Chamal Baalbek. However, local stakeholders engaged in the project considered that these other sectors can also be developed in a manner that aligns with the vision and directions of the union with regard to agriculture and tourism.

The industry sector, for example, stands out for its experienced workforce in food and artisanal manufacturing, coupled with various industrial assets like factories. This sector holds significant importance in driving economic activity, provided it is equipped with the necessary resources and supportive opportunities. It has the potential to complement and add value to the agriculture and tourism sectors, contributing to the local economy and creating employment opportunities, especially for the youth. Thus, local stakeholders involved in the project considered it crucial to protect small industries and enhance manufacturing crafts through specialized training. This necessitates efforts to secure cost-effective alternative sources of electricity, support industrialists, and shield local production from competition. Additionally, stakeholders argued that ensuring markets for both local and international product distribution is vital for sustained growth. To leverage these opportunities, they stated that there is a need to establish processing facilities for aniseed, a renowned local product, and improve existing cheese and other dairy factories. Enhancing the quality of home-made jam products and investing in the skills and capacities of local industrialists will further contribute to the qualitative development of the union's industrial landscape.

To activate the trade sector, local stakeholders participating in the project argued that there is a pressing need not only to encourage investment



in commercial activities but also to attract youth to be involved in them, discouraging their emigration. Local stakeholders also identified a need to safeguard small and medium-sized commercial enterprises within the union. Furthermore, they proposed promoting individual commercial initiatives leveraging electronic sales technology, incentivizing youth and women to establish small business projects through networking and coordination with relevant organizations and providing comprehensive training to traders in the union. Training programmes should encompass sales, purchasing, marketing fundamentals, feasibility studies for their projects, and strategies for enhancing their projects to increase income, thereby creating and facilitating employment opportunities for the union's youth.

If the union and the relevant municipalities prioritize the development of the agriculture and tourism sectors, it is imperative that other essential social and basic services are also available. These services can help retain Lebanese citizens in their towns and villages and attract other groups to work in the mentioned sectors. Moreover, if the union intends to attract investments from outside the region, it is essential that basic services like roads, water and electricity are available. Additionally, it is crucial to enhance health-care services in existing centres and clinics by supplying them with medical equipment and medications, in addition to supporting them with a complete emergency response plan. A sustainable plan should also be implemented for solid waste management throughout the UoM of Chamal Baalbek.

Agriculture

As shown above in the presentation of the current state of sectors within the UoM of Chamal Baalbek, including their available resources and potential opportunities, the agriculture sector presents a significant and real opportunity for the union's inhabitants to improve their economic situation and increase employment opportunities for both the youth and families. While many families engage in agriculture as a non-professional practice, considering it as a secondary and additional source of income, certain interventions, programmes and projects can lead to a qualitative leap in this sector. This requires the concerted efforts and capabilities of municipalities, civil society institutions, and the private sector, as well as funding from donor organizations, in order to enable the work towards achieving sustainable agricultural development.

According to local stakeholders engaged in the project, the process of developing the agriculture sector requires interventions at the infrastructure level, such as opening and rehabilitating agricultural roads that enable people to access and cultivate their lands. Water was also considered as a fundamental element for agricultural development, which necessitates municipalities and other relevant entities to work on protecting groundwater, increasing water reserves, establishing modern irrigation systems, and striving to conserve rainwater. This includes recycling used

household water and encouraging farmers to use treated wastewater for irrigation. It was also suggested to supply agricultural lands with irrigation water by supporting the cost of water pumping from wells that are operated by municipalities and the Water Establishment, as many farmers cannot afford the irrigation costs. Local stakeholders also argued that it is essential to consider and work towards finding alternative means of obtaining irrigation water. This could involve capturing rainwater in ponds or reservoirs, adopting drip irrigation methods, and creating reservoirs to collect rainwater in strategic locations, such as agricultural areas.

At the level of human resources, local stakeholders who participated in the project considered it important to activate existing agricultural cooperatives (such as for beekeeping and livestock), train farmers and strengthen agricultural guidance, and empower farmers with modern agricultural knowledge and technical expertise. Supporting farmers in marketing their agricultural products by facilitating the source-to-market connection, training livestock breeders to produce and use locally produced fodder to reduce imported feed consumption, and taking steps to improve animal health were highlighted. The opportunity to train unemployed youth in agricultural skills to provide them with employment opportunities and contribute to reducing delinquent behaviour was also identified. It was argued that these



steps can contribute to stimulating and developing agricultural and animal production. Additionally, technical programmes offered by donor organizations and relevant official institutions, such as ministries, were regarded to play a crucial role in these efforts.

To invigorate the agriculture sector, local stakeholders considered that it is also important to create a brand for packaging and exporting local agricultural products nationally and internationally. Moreover, according to local stakeholders, it is essential to introduce food products that align with the union's nature and characteristics. Furthermore, considering the use of renewable energy sources was highlighted to help mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Local stakeholders also emphasized the necessity of focusing on animal husbandry by activating veterinary care, training farmers on administering appropriate medications, conducting regular check-ups, and ensuring the well-being of livestock. Additionally, nurturing beekeeping and conducting honey inspections prior to marketing were highlighted as crucial aspects to consider.

From the above recommendations, it is evident that opportunities for agriculture sector development are available within the UoM of Chamal Baalbek. Local stakeholders engaged

in the project argued that it is essential for all municipalities and relevant stakeholders in the union to work collectively and coordinate their efforts. To initiate this process, it was suggested to establish an entity or committee of agricultural stakeholders at the union level. This entity should include representatives from municipalities, agricultural cooperatives, civil society associations, farmers and the private sector. This entity was envisioned to be responsible for creating a road map for local agricultural development, built upon multiple and progressive stages. Each stage would involve a set of programmes and interventions that address agricultural infrastructure and human skill development, considering a logical timeline. This entity should also engage with governmental, non-governmental and international supporting organizations to disseminate and promote the agreed-upon road map and priority projects. This entity could establish subcommittees to facilitate communication with a broader range of supporting entities.

Local stakeholders also argued that agriculture can play a fundamental role in boosting the tourism sector, focusing on restaurants that can benefit from the region's production of staple and renewable crops.

Proposed agriculture sector road map

Level of difficulty to implement	Budget to implement
High	High
Moderate	Moderate
Low	Low

Short time to achieve

- Establishing an agricultural committee within the UoM to engage with stakeholders
- Activating coordination and collaboration between relevant ministries and municipalities

Medium time to achieve

Relying on solar energy as a source for operating wells for irrigation

Enhancing the work of agricultural cooperatives and activating their role

Building a strong relationship with the Ministry of Agriculture and enhancing collaboration

Collaborating with civil defence and other relevant authorities to develop and implement a comprehensive plan for fire prevention and control

Involving local development-oriented NGOs in the collaboration process

Activating municipal and central government accountability to halt encroachments on public properties, forests and woodlands through stringent monitoring, legal measures, and imposing penalties

Collaborating with ministries and municipalities to establish a sustainable plan for infrastructure maintenance

Providing clean water for irrigation

Constructing and maintaining agricultural roads

Treating sewage water and using it for irrigation of specific crops

Establishing modern irrigation systems for agriculture

Preventing the disposal and burning of waste on agricultural lands

Integrating the use of modern technology in agriculture

Striving to establish centres for agricultural training and guidance

Long time to achieve

Working on establishing new specialized agricultural and livestock cooperatives

Establishing relationships with donor organizations to secure funding and resources for the implementation of projects, ensuring successful collaboration and project execution

- Conserving the natural resources in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek and leveraging their potential for sustainable development
- Protecting groundwater from pollution
- Preserving soil by establishing proper waste disposal sites
- Creating reserves to preserve natural resources
- Developing and implementing municipal regulations to conserve resources and natural areas

Training youth and women on agricultural topics and modern techniques

Guiding youth to reduce migration

Activating the relationship with expatriates and involving them in financing and marketing projects

Training residents on food processing and home-based food production

Activating agricultural guidance and training

Developing and implementing awareness campaigns to encourage residents to engage in agricultural work

Developing and implementing advertising and media campaigns to highlight the importance of agricultural products in the union

Encouraging youth to participate in agricultural cooperatives and enter the job market

Improving agricultural marketing by providing targeted training in packaging and labeling techniques, as well as exploring opportunities to access new markets outside the union

Infrastructure

Institutional framework

Natural resources

Human resources

Tourism

The above analysis of the current state of the tourism sector in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek has shown that the sector does not play a fundamental role in the local economy, though it has the potential to do so if the necessary investments are made and steps are taken, given the presence of touristic sites in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek.

Local stakeholders argued that it is necessary to build and empower local capacities to keep up with the process of revitalizing the tourism sector, which entails training human resources, especially the youth.

An important initial step that was identified by local stakeholders was for the UoM of Chamal Baalbek, in collaboration with civil society organizations, to seek funding, not necessarily large in scale, to develop a realistic tourism plan based on the available natural resources. The plan should propose a realistic timeframe, considering the existing challenges in terms of infrastructure and institutional framework, as well as the required duration for capacity development. Moreover, the plan must include a fundamental aspect that focuses on formulating appropriate policies and legal frameworks. The plan must include sufficient flexibility to allow for its implementation in multiple stages, based on priorities and the available financial resources for all interventions. It should also take into consideration the economic and financial conditions prevailing in Lebanon.

Local stakeholders engaged in the project argued that while preparing the strategic tourism plan, the UoM of Chamal Baalbek, in collaboration with the public and private sectors in the union, can initiate some activities and interventions that can stimulate the tourism sector, such as:

- Promoting rural tourism;
- Activating hunting tourism;
- Creating guesthouses, especially in homes with unused rooms;
- Upgrading roads;
- Providing public transportation; and
- Developing a comprehensive touristic map that encompasses points of interest, trails and routes.



Proposed tourism sector road map

Level of difficulty to implement	Budget to implement
High	High
Moderate	Moderate
Low	Low

Short time to achieve

- Building a strong relationship with the Ministry of Tourism and enhancing cooperation
- Establishing a local committee within the UoM to communicate with stakeholders

Medium time to achieve

- Maintaining roads leading to landmarks and tourist areas
- Relying on solar energy as a source to provide energy for tourist areas and facilities

- Enhancing collaboration between municipalities and the private sector
- Striving to develop a tourism plan for the union
- Involving local NGOs dedicated to local development in the tourism planning process
- Building relationships with existing universities to support tourism guidance for university students

- Training and empowering youth to provide tourism services
- Training residents in food processing and local food production
- Organizing regular tourist festivals
- Preparing and implementing recurrent awareness campaigns to encourage locals to engage in the tourism development process
- Creating and executing advertising and media campaigns about touristic sites and tourism activities in the union

Long time to achieve

- Providing basic services in the union (clean water, electricity, roads, sanitation, solid waste collection, etc.)
- Striving to establish a fixed transportation link from major cities to the UoM of Chamal Baalbek to enhance tourism
- Ensuring human resources for the protection and preservation of tourist and archaeological sites

- Activating municipal and official accountability to prevent encroachments on tourist landmarks, forests, woodlands, springs, rivers, etc.
- Building relationships with donor organizations to facilitate project implementation
- Working on increasing and incentivizing investments in tourism projects

- Preserving the natural resources in the UoM of Chamal Baalbek and investing in them
- Protecting and maintaining existing rivers and springs
- Limiting urban sprawl at the expense of areas of natural and cultural value
- Preserving and protecting the existing archaeological and heritage sites in the union
- Establishing reserves to conserve natural resources and attract visitors and tourists
- Developing and implementing municipal regulations to conserve natural resources and areas

Infrastructure

Institutional framework

Natural resources

Human resources

Conclusion

The developed road maps in the 10 booklets clearly show that advancing local socio-economic development in the 10 unions be in the agriculture, industry, or tourism sectors is indeed a complex and lengthy process, yet not impossible. This path requires collective and proper local strategic visioning coupled with clear commitment by all stakeholders and serious efforts at different levels, in addition to significant financial resources and solid coordination local structures and mechanisms.

It is also evident from the road maps that UoMs, with the contribution from municipalities enrolled, could initiate primary steps that do not require significant funding but still support and contribute to the implementation of the overall vision on the long run.

It should also be clear to the unions and to the other local actors that the implementation of the road maps requires collective efforts from all. This includes local communities, municipalities, UoMs, SDCs, civil society organizations, and the private sector. To facilitate this collaboration, it's proposed to create a local advisory body (committee) for each identified sector. It is advised that the committee to be established by the UoM and include representatives of local public and private entities and institutions. The main role of these committees will be to lead and develop practical action plans to commence the implementation of the road map for each respective sector. Members of these committees must commit to providing the time and efforts necessary to achieve progress at the level of each sector.

The next step would entail that each committee individually contacts concerned ministries under each sector to learn more about the ministries' strategies and plans and their financial and human capacity to support and guide the union in the process of tourism, industry, and/or agricultural development, especially with regard to developing local strategies for the three sectors.

Based on outcomes of the meetings with relevant ministries, the designated committees would make the necessary contacts with relevant universities and donors to seek the potential financial and technical support aiming to developing a strategy and an executive plan for each sector.

Realistically speaking and with the commitment of local actors, the above-mentioned tasks from the creation of local committees to establishing partnerships to identifying entities supporting the development of the sector strategy, should not exceed a period of six months. The strategy to be prepared for each sector is expected to propose a detailed doable business plan with a reasonable timeline and a clear budget.