



Authentic Aley

Strategy Document



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Authentic Aley

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FORWARD

Aley District in Mount Lebanon is a rural destination unlike any other. It is a land of unique experiences and diverse opportunities, where residents can enjoy life to the fullest. Only 20 minutes from Beirut, Aley was once a thriving tourist destination. But for over a decade, Aley's tourism industry has been in decline, presenting major challenges of unemployment for the district, forcing many to go to Beirut for job opportunities. Aley's cultural heritage and natural resources distinguish it from other districts in the region, and these qualities have energized The Green Hand Organization (GHO) to work in support of the Aley District over the past 15 years. Building on our intimate knowledge of and experiences in Aley, we present to you the framework for 'Authentic Aley,' a coordinated and comprehensive strategy to preserve, protect, and promote the cultural heritage, natural resources, and economic development of Aley District.

The Green Hand Organization sees an opportunity to strategically market Aley District's travel and tourism industry as a new landscape driven by economic opportunities, evolving demographics, emerging technology and shifts in consumer travel patterns. The Strategic Framework outlined in this document provides a proactive, creative and forward-thinking initiative to energize Aley District with a roadmap to get there. Aley District's tourism industry is well positioned to ensure that the area is recognized domestically as a vibrant travel destination generating jobs, earnings and tax revenues that contribute significantly to the economic success of Lebanon.

As you will note, a lot of research, strategic thinking, time and effort has been invested to update this framework. This has been done with one goal in mind: help Aley District continue to build its extremely important sustainable domestic tourism industry as a driver of economic development and job creation, thereby enhancing the quality of life for our residents.

Based on the strength of vision and consensus that this project has created, we should all be proud and grateful. Although this important project isn't complete, I would like to encourage all to continue building on the collaborative success we have achieved thus far to reach the vision that has been set.

With Greenest Regards,

Zaher A. Redwan
Founder, Chairman
Green Hand Organization



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank the many individuals and organizations that have contributed to this effort including:

Member of Parliament - Akram Chehayeb
Mayor of Aley Municipality - Wajdi Murad
Past President of the Municipal Union for West Aley and Shahhar - Walid Harb
President of the Municipal Union for West Aley and Shahhar - Michael Saad
Mayor of Abay and Ain Drafeel - Ghasen Hamzeh
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Mayor of Ainab - Ghazi Shaar
Ministry of Tourism - Petra Obied

In addition, I give thanks to the entire Green Hand team and its commissions which have dedicated so much time and effort to achieving our mission.

Zaher A. Redwan
Founder, Chairman of Board
Green Hand Organization



SNAPSHOT OF AUTHENTIC ALEY

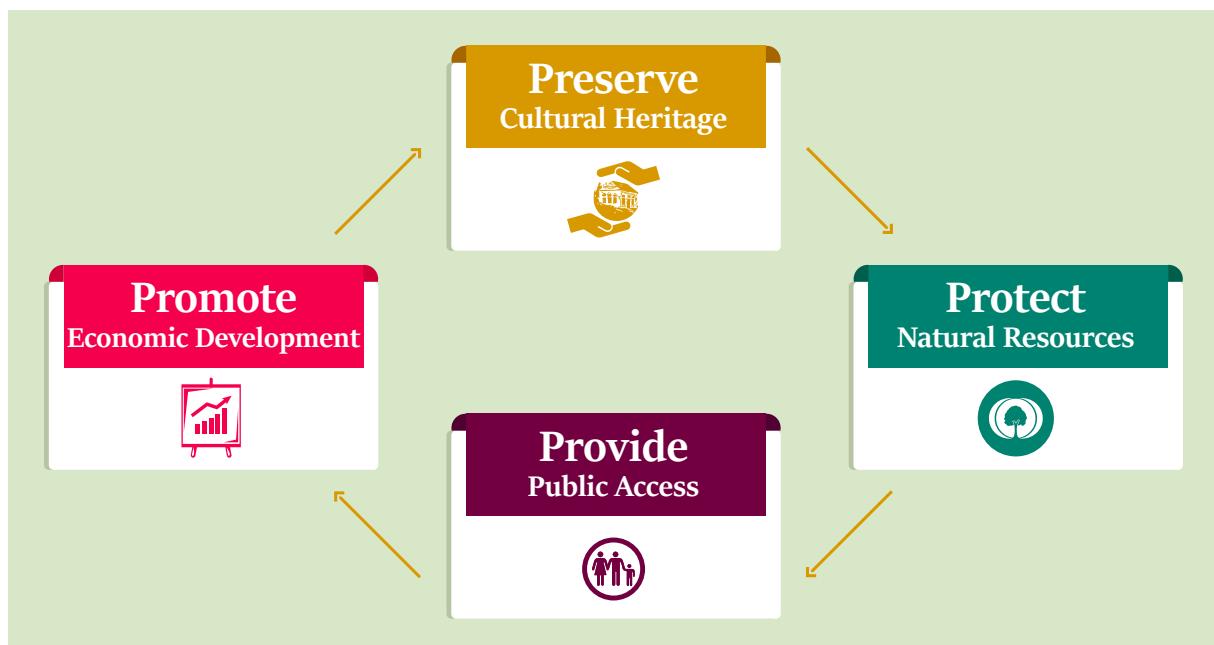
Aley and its surrounding villages are rich with history and cultural heritage that are important treasures for the Lebanese people. It is vital to keep these traditions alive today and to engage Lebanese youth in understanding and maintaining these traditions into the future.

Authentic Aley envisions a thriving Aley district with a strong economy built on agriculture, tourism, and Aley's unique environment. To achieve this vision, the natural resources of Aley must be protected, and its cultural heritage must be preserved (Appendix H).

The mission of Authentic Aley is to develop and implement a coordinated and comprehensive strategy to preserve, protect and promote the cultural heritage, natural resources and economic development of Aley District in Mt. Lebanon.

Working in partnership with the municipalities that comprise the Aley District, Authentic Aley will support the protection and preservation of key attractions, making them more accessible to tourists. In partnership with the local business community, Authentic Aley will develop and promote authentic, affordable experiences for existing and potential local travelers which will educate people about all this region has to offer.

The result will be economic development that is intrinsically linked to the protection and preservation of the environment and cultural heritage of Aley, a strategy that reinforces itself and is thus sustainable. A healthy environment comprised of rich local traditions and biodiversity makes for a strong foundation upon which to develop sustaining economic development (Appendix I).



PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem that Authentic Aley seeks to address is three-fold:

Lost cultural and natural heritage: Deteriorating conditions in rural Lebanon are causing younger generations to move to urban areas in search of better opportunities and living conditions, leaving their rural traditions behind. As a result, Lebanese people are unaware of the cultural and natural heritage, attractions, and activities of the villages within Aley District. Specifically, agriculture in the region has been greatly reduced. If this heritage is not valued, it runs the risk of being destroyed.

Declining economy: While Aley was once a thriving getaway for city dwellers with vibrant nightlife and many other attractions, tourism has suffered over the past decade. As a result, there is high unemployment in the service sector of Aley District and the economy is in a spiral of decline.

No coordinated strategy for rural development: The changes in economic and social culture as well as the structure of commercial tourism in Lebanon has caused decreased revenue for farm owners, high rates of unemployment in rural areas, and lack of balance in the demographics of rural areas within Aley District. Instead of reaping the benefits of a comprehensive strategy, pooled resources, and the leverage that coordinated, cross-municipality activities could provide, currently each village within Aley is working in isolation.





OPPORTUNITY

Given the existing conditions in Aley, there is a unique opportunity to deploy a domestic tourism strategy by means of establishing a connection between rural areas with their cultural, historic, ethnic and geographical roots. The development of a rural tourism strategy would involve binding local communities to nature through local small and medium-sized companies. The development of this strategy is not only measured in terms of money, but also by creation of new jobs which add vitality to a traditionally poor economy. Well-developed and focused rural tourism can become a new source of money and jobs and at the same time it can eliminate social isolation, creating synergies while protecting our natural resources and cultural heritage for future generations.

Why Aley District ?

Aley District in Mount Lebanon is approximately 102 square miles located to the south-east of Beirut, Lebanon's capital. The word "Aley" originates from the Aramaic and means "high place," referring to the town's high altitude above sea level. The locality, climate, shopping and dining make Aley District a potential major tourist destination in Lebanon and the Middle East.

With a population of more than 250,000, the Aley District is one of the most diverse religious regions in Lebanon, representing Druze, Maronite, Greek Orthodox Christian, Sunni, and Shiite.

Aley City, the capital of Aley District, is a picturesque city in Mount Lebanon located 17 km uphill from Beirut on the main road that leads to Damascus. This resort city with its increasing number of tourists and visitors has become the most flourishing resort in Mount Lebanon, and thus has garnered its historical name as "The Bride of Summers." Many outsiders, especially from Arab countries of the Persian Gulf, own homes in Aley where they spend their summers, escaping the heat and humidity in their own countries.

The Souk Aley is a relatively long historical boulevard lined with trees and numerous traditionally designed red-roofed stone houses. Visitors can enjoy cafes, outdoor restaurants, and nightlife pubs. In addition, there are several antique shops and retail boutiques along the street, which forms the heart of Aley City. Outside of the city, Aley District hosts country clubs, leisure resorts, boutique hotels, public swimming pools, specialized farms, the Old Outman Water Reserve, Princedom Heritage of Abey area, Silk Factory ruins, L'Heritage Country Club and more.

There are a wide range of products and services available to the local and regional public in all Aley District. These include eco-tourism, agritourism, special events and festivals, historic sites, bike tours and more. Provincial governments and local villages within the Aley District are actively involved in rural tourism employment and support rural tourism networks.

Below is a SWOT analysis that summarizes the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of focusing on Aley District for this project. For more information about Lebanon and Aley's agricultural, tourism and environmental sectors see Appendices A and B.



Strengths

- Rich with cultural, historical, religious and architectural heritage.
- Cool climate & scenic natural resources. Restaurants, cafes, boutiques.

Opportunities

- Name recognition of Aley.
- Previous infrastructure from past tourism.
- 120 attraction sites already documented.
- Provincial govt. involved in rural tourism.

Weaknesses

- No coordinated strategy and communication among municipalities
- Lack of brand awareness of tourist spots.
- Lack of proper infrastructure: signs, maps.
- Little financial and human resources working on this at the local level.

Threats

- Well known tourist spots outside Aley, like Byblos.
- Garbage crisis & water issues.
- Political influences that may go against Authentic Aley.

Why Rural Development?

The fundamental basis for building a responsible tourism model is to minimize impact, protect biodiversity, build environmental awareness, and respect the local culture. Authentic Aley is built on the premise that each sector is intertwined. For one to prosper, they must all thrive and hold each other up. To ensure a prosperous tourism sector in the long-term, environmental protection and cultural preservation must be part of the plan.

Aley offers a large number of attractions. Yet if they are mismanaged, not only will we see degradation of the environment and cultural heritage, but local communities will suffer. Because we are redeveloping the tourism industry, we have a rare opportunity to create a model that incorporates sustainable practices. A successful model must include all stakeholders, including local communities, visitors, industry and government.

Currently, a major issue in rural regions is the lack of opportunities for work. By looking at the tourism industry with a holistic viewpoint, we see that this model will create jobs outside of the tourism industry as well. This will develop more opportunities in farming, agro-processing, building infrastructure, natural resource management, and beyond.



There is a growing local clientele in Lebanon hungry for a more “authentic” experience of the country. Rural activities, such as fruit picking and hiking, are slowly moving from small groups of connoisseurs to being embraced by a broader public¹. Authentic Aley will meet this demand in a way that alleviates the vulnerabilities of the rural poor. Investing at the rural level in environmental protection, infrastructure, & education enhances a whole nation’s well being by increasing the national GDP and overall country productivity. For more information about Rural Development, see Appendix C.

Achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals

Tourism in many developing countries is the most viable and sustainable economic development option, and for some, the main source of foreign exchange earnings. This income trickles down to different groups of the society. If tourism is managed with a strong focus on poverty alleviation, it can directly benefit the poorer groups through employment of local people in tourism enterprises, goods and services provided to tourists, or the running of small and community-based enterprises, having positive impacts on reducing poverty levels. As a result, this strategy is in line with several of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.



SDG 1: No Poverty

Tourism generates new business opportunities. Even those rural businesses not directly involved in tourism can benefit from tourist activity through developing close relationships with tourist facilities where, for example, local foods can be used as part of the tourism offering. Rural tourism also facilitates expansion of complementary businesses such as service stations and new businesses are created to cater to tourist needs for hospitality services, recreational activities and arts/crafts.

SDG 5: Gender Equality

There are gross inequalities in access to paid employment and significant gaps between men and women in the labor market. Sexual violence and exploitation, the unequal division of unpaid care and domestic work, and discrimination in public decision making, all remain huge barriers. Authentic Aley recognizes these challenges and aims to explicitly work with women to reduce these inequalities.

¹ Rose, S. (2017). <http://www.executive-magazine.com/hospitality-tourism/sustaining-lebanons-rural-tourism>



SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

The aim of this goal is to encourage sustained economic growth by achieving higher levels of productivity and innovation. Promoting policies that encourage entrepreneurship and job creation are key to this, as are effective measures to eradicate forced labor, slavery and human trafficking. With these targets in mind, the goal is to achieve full and productive employment, and decent work, for all women and men by 2030. Authentic Aley aims to do just this, revitalizing an economy that is sustained through the sustainable utilization of local resources and assets.

SDG 11: Sustainable Communities and Cities

Making cities and communities safe and sustainable means ensuring access to safe and affordable housing and upgrading slum settlements. It also involves investment in public transport, creating green public spaces, and improving urban planning and management in a way that is both participatory and inclusive. At the heart of Authentic Aley is idea that we must value our local resources by investing in them and maintaining them for the future. In order to do so, we must create inclusive access to them in the form of protected areas, trails, signage & linkages between rural communities.

SDG 15: Life on Land

It is the intrinsic value of biological diversity, as well as the ecological, genetic, social, economic, scientific, educational, cultural, recreational and aesthetic values of biological diversity and its critical role in maintaining ecosystems that provide essential services, which are critical foundations for sustainable development and human well-being. Authentic Aley believes that protected natural resources are essential for a sustainable, thriving economy.

Aligning with the IUCN One Programme

Authentic Aley's comprehensive strategy to preserve, protect, and promote natural resources addresses the concerns which are closely aligned with the International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN). IUCN's Programme One conserves the integrity and diversity of nature and ensures natural resources are equitable and ecologically sustainable. Authentic Aley is a conduit in influencing, educating, and encouraging local communities and visitors to care for the land. GHO is an official, recognized member of IUCN and the head of the IUCN National Committee in Lebanon.

The Biodiversity Commission within GHO helps develop the skills of young biologists, communities, municipalities and civil societies on the protection and restoration of Lebanese biodiversity, mainly by understanding and reducing human impacts on the endangered and endemic species of Lebanon. These practices address issues such as managing threats to species and habitat, identifying and protecting endangered species and identifying important areas for protection. In addition, this process builds partnerships between government agencies, conservation groups, universities, and private landowners in the aim of conserving biodiversity.



STRATEGY

Who - Green Hand Organization as Strategic Managing Partner

Green Hand Organization (GHO) was founded in 1999 and registered in 2003 as an environmental, social, cultural NGO focused on “Binding Community to Nature.” The membership of GHO consist of more than 78 experts and specialists from all over Lebanon and abroad, empowering communities to utilize their cultural assets, including native plants and local commerce, to promote environmental and economic sustainability. GHO endeavors to redefine the ethics of good citizenship as a positive interaction with nature, in order to yield conservation and sustainability of Lebanon’s rich culture.

GHO works by educating and mobilizing local communities to promote environmental and social development. Great organizations understand the importance of having the right team approach and members to plan and execute. GHO believes that when aligned with good people, an organization or initiative will thrive, grow, and respond adequately to known and unknown risks. The leadership within GHO is not isolated at the top, but rather embraces ideas and leadership from all of its team members.

GHO accomplishes its mission through four commissions: the Biodiversity Commission, the Medicinal Edible Aromatic Plant (MEA) Commission, the Green Home Commission, and the Educational Commission. GHO’s programs extend country-wide with a scope that includes working with farmers, landowners, craftsmen, underprivileged families, home-made traditional food items’ producers, wild herbs harvesters, and youth. For more information about GHO, see Appendix D.

Who - Public Sector

To be successful, Authentic Aley will require strong partnership with the public sector. Currently, Authentic Aley has established partnership with the Ministry of Tourism and twenty municipalities (listed below) of the seventy in the Aley District.

- Aley
- Souk AlGharb
- Ghaboun
- Baysour
- Abey-Ein Drafeel
- Ain El Remene
- Ain El Sayde
- Kayfoun
- Ainab
- Al Basateen
- Dfoun
- Jesr El Kadi
- Kfarmatta
- Mejdlaya
- Remhala
- Selfeya
- Shemlen
- Al Bennay
- Bmakeen
- Sarahmoul

Later phases of the strategy will seek to develop additional buy-in from the remaining municipalities in Aley District.



Who - Private Sector

The private sector will play a critically important role in Authentic Aley, not only as one of its key beneficiaries, but also as its chief customer, partner, and ambassador.

Authentic Aley depends on committed business owners, innovators and entrepreneurs to not only creatively transform latent cultural and environmental assets into business opportunities that will attract tourists, but also to embrace its core values and align with its standards and vision.

At times, this will require significant business resources and a commitment to align with Authentic Aley. This positions its business members within the tourism value chain and influences how it organizes their relations with suppliers, clients, and partners in order to generate profits. There is a significant value proposition for these businesses:

- **Leverage GHO and municipal support and resources to:**
 - more successfully launch a new business.
 - significantly increase the size and commitment of a customer base of an existing business.
- **Join a network of other businesses and cultural/environmental organizations that will provide opportunities for synergy and strategic, value-added partnerships.**

Authentic Aley will interact with the business community through two tiers of business membership:

Tier I: This membership is available to those businesses who embody what it means to be Authentic Aley, specifically including producers and attractions. Examples include the needlework crafts-women and micro-reserves. These businesses pay monthly membership dues, in exchange for Authentic Aley's branding and marketing to increase customers and revenues. Authentic Aley will also provide resources for new product and synergy for package development based on customer demand and willingness to pay. Customers will know that they are contributing to the revitalization and protection/preservation of natural and cultural resources of Aley District by supporting "Authentic" businesses.

Tier II: This membership is available to those businesses that wish to support Authentic Aley and reap the benefits of its branding and marketing, but do not deal directly with Aley's natural and cultural heritage. This primarily includes services like local taxi companies, hotels, and restaurants. Should these businesses meet Authentic Aley's standards for participation (these are yet to be detailed, but examples include hiring locally and utilizing local products where possible), then they would be eligible to Support Aley, in exchange for a monthly flat rate membership fee.

Not only do these two tiers of membership make Authentic Aley inclusive, but this structure also allows the initiative to grow the standards of authenticity among all businesses in Aley District, creating a more robust and sustainable business environment.



Who- Advisory Board

The Authentic Aley Advisory Board is a 10-member committee made up of members of parliament, municipal representatives, business owners, and the general public. All members reside within the Aley District. The Authentic Aley Advisory Board Members (“AABM”) will meet once a month to advise and help to implement the strategic framework. In addition, AABM’s will help to create heightened exposure within their communities and provide leadership to move Authentic Aley through the five phases of the strategy framework.

Each Board Member will serve for a one (1) year term with the opportunity to renew up to three terms. Each member plays an important role in crafting the “Authentic” brand as preserving, protecting, and promoting the rural development agenda within Aley District.

- Develop tourism industry relationships: provide council on development efforts, serve in a supportive role for the Authentic Aley Members, bring insights to the tourism management and marketing planning processes, and help ensure transparency for Authentic Aley
- Engage with the private sector in creating public/private partnership to co-create strategy and media campaigns for Authentic Aley
- Resolve problems, review program evaluations, and approve the annual budget and report
- Serve as a representative of Authentic Aley while attending community events and advisory board meetings
- Identify funding opportunities
- Provide administrative guidance to volunteers, assign and schedule their work, and motivate them to complete targets within deadlines
- Document new policies, decisions, and archive activities
- Attend meetings with donors and governmental and non-governmental officials to implement new policies and settings
- Form volunteer coalition teams within local communities to problem solve local improvements
- Guide website development, including the list of attractions and calendar of events
- Guide an interactive media campaign tied to the 3Ps of the strategic framework
- Create a segmented database of emails for direct email targeting, developed from various trade and travel shows and internet campaigns



What - Strategic Framework

The Strategic Plan is oriented around two major areas of work and responsibility:

(1) Destination Marketing, Promotion, Visitors Services

- Strategies and plans associated with building tourism demand through efficient and effective marketing led in partnership with Green Hand Organization (GHO) and the Ministry of Tourism (MOT)

(2) Sustainable Destination Coordination and Product Development

- Focused on strategies and plans associated with building a quality tourism experience (supply) through a focus on infrastructure, product and operations of the destination led by the GHO

The Strategic Plan touches on some important organizational and leadership issues that will have a major impact on the overall success of the initiative, trying to provide guidance and cohesion for many stakeholder groups and to break down specific groups that limit the industry's potential impact. GHO has set out the necessary requirements to achieve the strategic direction for domestic tourism for the Aley District. The most critical of these goals and targets is to 'grow domestic tourism for a sustainable tourism economy' with the main objectives being to:

- Increase revenue (job creation)
- Increase domestic tourism volume
- Enhance measures & efforts aimed at addressing seasonality & equitable geographical spread
- Enhance the level of the culture of tourism/travel among Lebanese people
- Increase investment in agriculture
- Empower SMEs

The strategy is supported by the following values:

- Responsible tourism
- Respect for culture and heritage
- Service excellence
- Sector transformation
- Transparency
- Integrity



When - Strategic Phases

Phase I: Develop Strategy (May 2017-March 2018)

Purpose:

- Engage stakeholders to develop Authentic Aley strategy
- Gather initial data to support strategy development
- Convene stakeholders for project buy-in

Action Items:

- Each village identifies its list of attractions. Examples of attractions include:
 - Hiking & biking trails
 - Natural beauty, e.g., waterfalls, gardens
 - Historically significant sites, e.g., schools, buildings, statues
 - Religious sites, e.g., churches, synagogues, mosques
 - Restaurants serving homemade food from local ingredients
 - Guest houses and other lodging
 - Local craftsmen and artisans
- Visit attractions to collect data on each (for data collection form, see Appendix E).
- Consolidate information in a database according to the standards presented in this strategic framework
- Analyze and categorize the data
- Finalize a draft of the strategic plan and organize a meeting for plan adoption based on initial data collection
- Phase I will be closed out by plan adoption at the 27 March 2018 meeting and a pitch for Advisory Board members

Phase II: Launch Pilot (April 2018-March 2019)

Purpose:

- Proof of concept
- Market research
- Build brand awareness
- Refine value proposition of Authentic Aley to guide Phase III



Action items:

- Establish Advisory Board
- Finalize strategy from meeting on 27 March 2018
- Municipalities, businesses, GHO, and Advisory Board co-create criteria of:
 - Tier 1 and Tier 2 Authentic Aley membership standards and requirements
 - Benefits to, and requirements of participating businesses in pilot (Authentic Aley Ambassadors)
- Execute pilot
 - Advisory Board and municipalities select well-established founding Authentic Aley businesses that participate in pilot
 - 1 farm/agricultural site, 1 attraction, 1 producer
 - 3-5 taxi companies, 3-5 hotels, 3-5 restaurants
 - Businesses in the pilot serve as Authentic Aley Ambassadors
 - Work with businesses, municipalities to roll out branding and marketing, including “Quality Seal” for businesses to display membership
 - Set up attraction sites to be ready for visitors
 - Create website, directory, and map
- Organize Launching Ceremony for Authentic Aley in August 2018
 - Part-way through the pilot initiative, Authentic Aley will organize a “launching ceremony” to inform the public of the pilot activities and garner attention
- Assess pilot to identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities to improve
 - Survey/interview businesses and municipalities to assess if Authentic Aley met their needs
 - Survey/interview tourists to assess if Authentic Aley met their needs, expanded their view of tourism, and informed their knowledge of Aley

Phase III: Deliver Capacity-Building (April 2019-Ongoing)

Purpose:

- Expand participation in the program
- Align more businesses to Authentic Aley standards
- Inform visitors of attractions and local businesses

Action items:

- Offer capacity-building trainings to align with Authentic Aley standards
 - Tier I businesses:
 - Product development
 - Market research



- Sales channels
- Business models
- Tier II businesses:
 - Incorporate Authentic Aley standards to business practices
- GHO, Municipalities, Advisory Board help businesses with Authentic standards
 - Food producers and craftsmen
 - Find best location for retail hubs, such as farmer and crafts markets
 - Develop proper infrastructure for markets, such as refrigeration, transportation, staff to sell goods
 - Prepare producers for customers & visitors, through product development and marketing
 - Attractions
 - Grow staff for site maintenance and daily activities
 - Develop signs, websites, google maps, & other ways to inform public about the attraction
 - Public-private partnership
 - Hospitality businesses
 - Register on google maps, develop website; ensure accurate information online
 - Align to Authentic Aley standards
 - Biodiversity and conservation
 - Clean natural areas (develop trails, clean litter, etc.)
 - Post proper signage, create website, add to google maps to inform public about attraction
 - Post information about native species for educational purposes
- To support capacity-building, develop a producer market, if determined useful
- Add businesses to directory list, website, map once they meet Authentic Aley standards

Phase IV: Measure Impact (October 2019-April 2020)

Purpose:

- Understand strengths and weaknesses of Authentic Aley
- Implement project improvements
- Increase brand awareness and public accessibility as program improves

Action items:

- Develop impact report, assess best practices, determine opportunities for project improvement
- Develop tourism information hubs
- Mass marketing campaign for Authentic Aley

Example: create small programs to showcase Authentic Aley products/services and develop synergies among Tier 1 and Tier 2 businesses



Phase V: Scale Project (May 2020-Ongoing)

Purpose:

- Create a widespread model of sustainable tourism
- Focus on ensuring project quality and scaling the depth of Authentic Aley

Action items:

- Approach additional municipalities in Aley which have not yet partnered with Authentic Aley
- for signed MOUs
- Repeat previous steps in new municipalities

For a list of specific tactics, see Appendix F.



ILLUSTRATIVE BUSINESS MODEL

The business model canvas outlines all inputs and outcomes of a business or organizational activity, highlighting nine different aspects:

Key activities: What does the organization do?

Key partners: Who does the organization work with?

Key resources: What infrastructure is needed?

Value proposition: What unique benefit does the activity or company provide to its customers?

Relationships: How do you develop and sustain relationship with customers?

Channels: How do you reach your customer?

Customers: Who are your customer segments?

Costs: What do you spend money on?

Revenue: What generates revenue?

For a business model canvas of Authentic Aley, see Appendix G.

Initial budget projections are as follows:

Cost Structure in USD

Phase I: \$

Phase II: \$

Phase III: \$

Phase IV: \$

Phase V: \$

Total Projected Cost: \$

Revenue Structure in USD

Phase I: \$

Phase II: \$

Phase III: \$

Phase IV: \$

Phase V: \$

Total Projected Revenue: \$

Total Projected Profit: \$



GAINING MOMENTUM

Accomplishments

To date, GHO has performed the following steps:

- Identified 20 municipalities around Aley, each with noteworthy attractions
- Signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with 20 municipalities to create a commitment to our shared vision for Authentic Aley
- Created a list of attraction sites in each municipality
- Visited each village to collect comprehensive data on the village and its attractions
- Categorized sites as craftsmen, business owner, food producer, and attraction
- Identified best practices of tourism around the world
- Developed a google map of these categorized attractions
- Garnered support from the local governments and developed public/private partnership
- Scheduled a meeting for 27 March with a two-tier goal in mind:
 - Finalize the strategy document to close out Phase I
 - Ensure continued commitment and support to move into Phase II

Recommended Next Steps

- The most immediate task for Authentic Aley is to create an official Advisory Board, which will address and tackle the gaps within the municipalities, the weak communication between attraction sites and the public, and relationships between the private sector and municipalities
- The Advisory Board will take ownership over this strategy, and recruit experts from ministries, NGOs, research centers, donors, private sector to monitor strategy implementation



Appendices

APPENDIX A: ABOUT LEBANON



Lebanon, a country of approximately four million, was created in September of 1920 as a result of the French mandate to expand the former autonomous Ottoman Mount Lebanon's borders. Lebanon subsequently became an independent country in 1943. The Lebanese flag features a green cedar against a white backdrop, bounded by two red stripes along the top and bottom. Its temperate climate, delicious food, and World Heritage sites continue to attract large numbers of tourists to Lebanon annually, despite its periodic political instability.

Lebanon has a free-market economy and a strong laissez-faire commercial tradition. Although the government promotes foreign investment, the investment climate suffers from many restrictions, delays, and obstacles. The Lebanese economy is service-oriented, with its main growth sectors in banking and tourism.

Lebanon is not without its challenges, the country continues to face serious challenges in translating relative financial wealth as a high middle-income country, into broad-based, socio-economic progress for its people, with significant regional disparities & pockets of extreme poverty remaining.²

Agriculture in Lebanon is the third most important sector in the country. It contributes nearly 7% to GDP and employs around 15% of the active population. Lebanon, whose variety of agricultural lands--from the interior plateau of the Beqaa Valley to the narrow valleys leading downward to the sea--enables farmers to grow both European and tropical crops. Tobacco and figs are grown in the south, citrus fruits and bananas along the coast, olives in the north and around the Shouf Mountains, and fruits and vegetables in the Beqaa Valley. More exotic crops include avocados, grown near Byblos.

In recent years, Lebanon's agriculture, which offers fertile land, landscaped terraces, and fresh and healthy products, faces several challenges. Improper agricultural practices have aversive environmental effects, such as soil erosion, depletion of underground water resources & water pollution. Additionally, inappropriate use of pesticides & fertilizers have had negative health impacts on the population.

² <http://www.lb.undp.org/content/lebanon/en/home/countryinfo.html>



Recently, the agriculture sector has diminished due to rampant urbanization, including in the coastal plains and in parts of the Beqaa Valley. Government policies have focused on increasing water irrigation availability and controlling pesticide use, with few incentives for water- and soil-conserving irrigation techniques. The private sector is gradually taking advantage of new but small-scale opportunities offered by organic farming and high-value agricultural produce.

Water pollution is a serious problem for the Lebanese people as much as air pollution is. Trash is a major problem and it produces intolerable odors and polluted sites all around the country. Many of the country's myriad environmental problems were caused by conflicts in the unsettled region. They include civil war era dumps of toxic chemicals and oil spills along the coastline. Residents also burn large amounts of waste every year, a practice that has a negative impact on the country's forests and air and can spark forest fires.

From Stone Age settlements to Phoenician city-states; from Roman temples to rock-cut hermitages; from Crusader Castles to Mamluk mosques and Ottoman hammams, the country's vibrant historical and archaeological sites are scattered through the country. Interest in the Lebanese Levantine culture was stirred following the visits of many scholars and poets particularly Alphonse de Lamartine, Ernest Renan and Victor Guérin.

Lebanon's diverse atmosphere and ancient history make it an important destination which is slowly rebuilding itself after continued turmoil. Lebanon offers plenty: ancient Roman ruins, well-preserved castles, limestone caves, historic Churches & Mosques, beautiful beaches nestled in the Mediterranean Sea, world-renowned Lebanese cuisine, nonstop nightlife & discothèques, to mountainous ski resorts.

The tourism industry in Lebanon has been historically important to the local economy and remains a major source of revenue for Lebanon. Before the Lebanese Civil War, Beirut was widely regarded as "The Paris of the Middle East or also "The Pearl of the Middle East," often cited as a financial and business hub where visitors could experience the Levantine Mediterranean culture, cuisine, history, archaeology, and architecture of Lebanon.

The Gulf Countries: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman -- prior to 2012, would escape their desert heated summers in favor of a milder climate to Lebanon. These Gulf Nationals (GN) historically constituted the biggest percentage of visitors to Lebanon, at about 40 percent of the tourism industry. Lebanon holds a unique appeal for Gulf Nationals because it provides an opportunity to live a European experience while speaking Arabic.

Unfortunately, Lebanon has suffered over the past six years because of security incidents, travel warnings and restrictions urging Gulf nationals to avoid travel to Lebanon because of the ongoing fighting with Syria. Travel has declined from 2.2 million visitors in 2010 to 1.85 million in 2011 to 1.6 million in 2012.

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), travel from these countries have increased in 2017 due to the travel ban being lifted. The country has attracted new investment in the tourism industry and has increased hotel capacity. What's more, Lebanon has put up its largest pavilion at the Arabian Travel Market with 32 partners trying to win back the GN tourists.

APPENDIX B: ALEY DISTRICT



There are two types of agriculture in Lebanon: commercial agriculture and agriculture mainly devoted to the preservation of cultural and family heritage. Commercial agriculture is practiced in around 35 thousand farming units and covers about 25% of total agricultural holdings. Agriculture devoted to preservation of cultural and family heritage, which most rural farmers practice, generates little opportunities for profit, and considered as extra income and as subsistence agriculture.

The agricultural sector employs approximately 195,000 farmers, up from 143,000 in 1961. Twenty-nine percent of farmers are in the North, followed by Mount Lebanon (21.6 percent) and the Bekaa (18 percent). About 66 percent of farmers have second, non-agricultural jobs. The share of cultivated land is almost equally divided between farmers who work exclusively in agriculture and farmers who also work elsewhere.

Agricultural production is also increasingly shifting to irrigated production, thereby putting added pressure on dwindling water resources. Increased irrigation implies more groundwater pumping, leading to salty buildup in the soil conditions. Off-farm production (i.e., grazing) is a potential source of pressure on plant cover and may delay the natural regeneration of forests.



Abandoning agriculture is leading to the degradation of agricultural terraces, some of which date back hundreds of years. To conserve water and to prevent soil erosion from washing down the slopes, the Phoenicians crafted the mountains into giant staircases (Zurayk, 1994). Occasionally, forests were cleared to increase arable surface areas, and were transformed into terraced fields. Today, the maintenance of terraced lands is labor intensive and requires communal efforts when carried out on a large scale. Over recent decades, and particularly during the years of conflict (1975-1990), neglect and rural-urban migration lead to land degradation. Terrace walls fail unless properly maintained, potentially leading to very high rates of soil erosion.

Aley District's alpine climate is cool in the summer making it adequate and desirable for growing roses, dahlias, and stromelia in greenhouses. Flower farmers produce many different species of flowers, and roses are the most prevalent species. Upfront capital investments required include land preparation, purchasing of rose plants, and purchasing and installing greenhouses, drainage systems, and drip irrigation systems.

The role of rural development has become a necessity for balanced development. It is based on the establishment of integrated anti-poverty agricultural programs taking into consideration the particularities of rural areas, and involving the development of social sectors and the provision of minimum living allowances and job opportunities.

Strengths

- Adequate areas suitable for cultivation
- Water availability
- Attachment to the land
- Agricultural tradition
- Suitable climate

Opportunities

- High cost of irrigation infrastructure
- Poor technical management
- Absent commercial channels
- Land fragmentation
- Agricultural Infrastructure
- Agricultural Investments

Weaknesses

- Production decline in neighboring countries
- Strategic position of Mount Lebanon
- Terraces farming
- Agro-tourism and agro-biodiversity

Threats

- Competition from countries with cheaper labor
- Competition from countries with higher productivity



About Aley District Environment

Lebanon is part of the Mediterranean basin and is known to be one of 34 biodiversity hotspots on the planet housing around 2,600 different species of which 12% are endemic to it Lebanon. Lebanon is also known to be heavily wooded in comparison to most other countries in the region. Its diverse topography explains the diversification of the micro-climates distributed over its surface, and justifies its wide range of habitats and species as well.

These treasures are threatened by climate change, human activities, urbanization, quarries and the increasing population and wildfires.

Mountainous areas were affected by the largest number of fires and the largest extent of burnt areas, followed by valleys and plains consecutively. What's more, as Lebanon is a small area for the amount of biodiversity it houses, makes conservation that much more important.

Biodiversity encompasses all the varieties of plants, animals and living organisms and is of great concern to the needs of mankind. Biodiversity is abundant and varies in different ecosystems like fresh water, marine ecosystem, forest, wetlands, and agricultural ecosystems. All these ecosystems have many ecological niches and directly or indirectly are of economic importance to man. At ecosystem level, biodiversity provides the conditions & drives the processes that sustain the global economy & the survival of our species. Ecosystems provide us with many benefits & services.

Moreover, Aley District from sea shore to Air Dara in the mountains with the dynamic geography and mountains, vivid micro-climates and micro eco-systems, make it the perfect environmental location within all Lebanon. There are many dynamic environmental attractions to include: natural hiking trails, rivers, and springs.



Tourism is an important economic activity for employment and economic growth, and development of socioeconomic integration of rural and underdeveloped areas.

A tourist attraction is a place of interest where tourists visit, typically for its inherent or exhibited natural or cultural value, historical significance, natural or built beauty, offering leisure, adventure and amusement. Tourism generates new opportunities. Even for those rural businesses not directly involved in tourism can benefit from tourist activity through developing close relationships with tourist facilities where local foods can be used as part of the tourism offering in a locality. Complementary businesses such as wild herbs harvester, beekeepers, farmers, families featuring different lines of hand processed and crafted products reflecting authenticity, reviving cultural heritage can be incorporated and created to cater to tourist needs for hospitality services, recreational activities and arts/crafts.

Silk production has played a role in shaping Lebanese society, particularly in Mount Lebanon, where the bulk of the country's silk factories brought industry and a demand for workers, unbiased to gender, to a land mainly home to peasants. It changed the social structure in Lebanon. Women started working in factories, and young girls going to work and starting to earn money.



APPENDIX C: RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND RURAL TOURISM

All rural expansion work takes place within a process of development and cannot be considered as an isolated activity. Expansion programs and projects are part of the development of rural societies. It is, therefore, important to understand the definition of development, and to understand and comprehend how development can influence the course of rural expansion work.

The term development does not refer to one single phenomenon or activity nor does it mean a general process of social change. All societies, rural and urban, are changing all the time. This change affects, for example, the society's norms and values, its institutions, its methods of production, the attitudes of its people and the way in which it distributes its resources. A rural society's people, customs and practices are never static but are continually evolving into new and different forms. There are different theories which seek to explain this process of social change (as evolution, as cultural adaptation or even as the resolution of conflicting interests).

Development is more closely associated with some form of action or intervention to influence the entire process of social change. It is a dynamic concept which suggests a change in, or a movement away from, a previous situation. All societies are changing, and rural expansion attempts to develop certain elements of society to influence the nature and speed of change. In the past few decades, different nations have been studied and their level of development has been determined; this has given rise to the use of terms such as developed as opposed to developing nations. In other words, it is assumed that some nations have advanced or changed more than others, and indeed these nations are often used as the model for other developing nations to follow.

This process of development can take different forms and have different objectives for example:

- Development involves the introduction of new ideas into a social system to produce higher per capita income' and levels of living through modern production methods and improved social organization.
- Development implies a total transformation of a traditional or pre-modern society into types of technology and associated social organization that characterize the advanced stable nations of the Western world.
- Development is building up the people so that they can build a future for themselves. Development is an experience of freedom in deciding what people choose to do. To decide to do something brings dignity and self-respect. Development efforts therefore start with the people's potential and proceed to their enhancement and growth.³

The process and approaches needed to adopt in order to develop has three main elements:

- **Economic:** The development of the economic or productive base of any society, which will produce the goods and materials required for life.

³ <http://www.fao.org/docrep/10060e/10060eo2.htm>



-
- **Social:** The provision of a range of social amenities and services (i.e., health, education, welfare) which care for the non-productive needs of a society.
 - **Human:** The development of the people themselves, both individually and communally, to realize their full potential, to use their skills and talents, and to play a constructive part in shaping their own society.

Development has to do with the above three (3) elements. It should not concentrate upon one to the exclusion of the others. The economic base of any society is critical, for it must produce the resources required for livelihood. But we must also think of people and ensure their active participation in the process of development.

Rural Development

Rural development (RD) is the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in rural areas, often relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas.⁴

RD has been, by tradition, centered on the abuse of land-intensive natural resources such as agriculture and forestry. However, changes in global production networks and increased urbanization have changed the character of rural areas. Increasingly, tourism, niche manufacturers, and recreation have become dominant economic drivers for these agricultural areas. The need for rural communities to approach development from a wider perspective has created more focus on a broad range of development goals rather than merely creating incentive for agricultural or resource based businesses. Education, entrepreneurship, physical infrastructure, and social infrastructure all play an important role in developing rural regions.⁵

RD is also described by its prominence on locally produced economic development strategies. In contrast to urban regions, which have many similarities, rural areas are highly distinctive from one another. For this reason, there are a large variety of rural development approaches used globally. RD is a broad term. It basically focuses on action for the development of areas outside the mainstream urban economic system.

Rural Tourism

Rural Tourism (RT) is increasingly being used as a development strategy to improve the social and economic well-being of rural areas. RT covers a vast array of activities, both natural or manmade attractions and services. RT is not just farm-based tourism. It includes farm-based holidays, nature holidays and ecotourism, walking, climbing and riding holidays, adventure, sport and health tourism, hunting and angling, educational travel, arts and heritage tourism, and, in some areas, ethnic tourism. A major form of tourism is eco-tourism, which refers to — tourism directed towards exotic natural environments, intended to support conservation efforts and observe wildlife.

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rural_development

⁵ Rural development research: a foundation for policy (1. publ. ed.). Westport, Conn. [u.a.]: Greenwood Press. 1996. ISBN 0-313-29726-6.



RT has many potential benefits for increased employment growth, an expanded economic base, repopulation, social improvement, and revitalization of local crafts. RT events have been found to increase business, income and employment within a region and are seen to assist with social and economic development. RT can be described as a country's experience covering a wide

range of attractions and activities that take place in agricultural areas. Its basic characteristics include natural settings, rural communities and lifestyles, scenic attractions, agricultural environments, local culture and visitors coming directly to experience these attributes.

The biggest constraining factor to RT is the perception that the local population are unaware of their local attractions and activities, a perception that has been growing amongst consumers for years. However, the second biggest category has been reported as “no reason to take a trip”.

Tourism is not the solution for all rural problems, but it has number of positive attractions. It is one of the many opportunities that rural communities might consider improving productivity and incomes.

The development of the domestic portfolio is as important as that of the international portfolio for the growth of tourism in Lebanon. Domestic tourism is an essential contributor to the growth of the tourism economy and provides a foundation for sustainable tourism growth and development, more especially in times of global uncertainties. Most adult Lebanese living in the Mt. Lebanon area have not had an opportunity to undertake holiday trip within this region for various reasons resulting in the current lack of a travel culture amongst most of the local and what is called the ecotourism sector.

APPENDIX D: GREEN HAND ORGANIZATION



Vision

A world where cultural assets thrive and support environmental conservation.

Mission

Green Hand Organization empowers and educates local communities on the value of biodiversity and climate change mitigation while working to connect economic prosperity with environmental health.

Green Hand Organization (GHO) works in areas of environmental conservation, cultural and historical enterprises, and economic support programs with local businesses. GHO has a strong commitment to growing and binding communities to nature.

GHO has a high-quality team and partner base specialized in agricultural, technical, scientific, and educational expertise. Our volunteers add great value and awareness to our work. These team members work tirelessly to achieve sustained results. GHO team members are the organization's backbone because:

- they meet tight deadlines
- they adapt quickly to unforeseen circumstances
- they accomplish high quality work that sustains biodiversity, cultural heritage, and educating communities throughout Lebanon

GHO Values

As a team we are:

- Motivated by results. Focus on our impact and how we contribute to our communities.
- Doers, not talkers. But when we act, we act thoughtfully.
- Believe in the spirit of responsible citizenship. Our members promote unity, solidarity, and tolerance.
- Hardworking, passionate individuals. We challenge ourselves to improve at the individual, organizational, and community level.



-
- Believe in the power of cross-sector collaboration. Our work is more effective when we operate within private-public partnerships.
 - Are a non-sectarian organization. We celebrate, respect, and include all people, cultures, regions, religions, and political views.

Our organization is committed to:

- Encouraging businesses to commit to environmentally friendly measures
- Upholding standards from the Convention on Biological Diversity along with all nature conventions and treaties
- Adopting international standards for conservation
- Adapting our programs to the unique needs of our communities
- Engaging a diverse group of stakeholders, and respecting distinct viewpoints

Commission Involvement

The technical team of each Commission provides technical support on the action plan level.

The **Biodiversity Commission** protects and conserves floral biodiversity, with a focus on native species. We do this through:

- Innovative research that contributes to IUCN's list of endangered species
- Setting up micro-reserves and other municipal lands that protect biodiversity
- Creating the first mobile botanic garden for schools and visitors to learn about Lebanon's native species

The **Medicinal Edible & Aromatic (MEA) Plants Commission** adopts MEA plants as an alternative cropping solution to integrate traditional agricultural practices in the economy. We do this through:

- Developing a MEA Educational Forest in the Baysour Municipality that provides a tangible example to farmers and communities of the importance of MEA plants
- Creating value for MEA seedlings and products in Lebanon's economy

The **Green Home Commission** revives & sustains cultural heritage and traditional knowledge within local industries to build a sustainable economy and environmental well-being. We do this through:



-
- Training farmers, producers, and craftsmen on developing a viable business model with traditional practices and products
 - Connecting traditional products and practices to consumers through Authentic Aley

The **Educational Commission** raises community awareness of cultural assets, traditional knowledge, and environmental best practices. We do this through:

- Connecting other GHO commissions to communities to meet local needs

Fields of Intervention

Agriculture

- Capacity Building
- Distribution of crop alternatives and other sustainable products

Economical development

- Vocational Training
- Capacity Building Programs
- Product Development
- Rural Development

Cultural / Patrimony

- Revive traditional heritage
- Ecotourism
- Artistic recycling

Environmental

- Scientific research
- Conserving endangered species
- Reforestation & micro-reserves
- Waste management



APPENDIX E: TACTICS

The core objectives of Authentic Aley include:

- Building a “product” consisting of all the possible attractions to drive visitor traffic to this area
- Educating the Lebanese public, with a focus on the youth, about the attractions in Aley and the surrounding villages
- Working with the participating municipalities to develop their key attractions and create a very positive experience for visitors
- Assisting local people in the villages to develop their businesses while maintaining the authenticity
- Sustaining the producers and craftsmen by developing this region
- Providing jobs and improving livelihoods for local food producers and craftsmen
- Developing green responsible tourism in Aley and the surrounding district

Guiding Principles:

- The ultimate goal is to create jobs and improve the livelihoods of people living in the rural villages surrounding Aley
- Aley will initially host the Information Center and will be the hub for the pilot program
- All building restoration for attractions, guest houses, etc. will be done following green building practices whenever possible
- Conservation of the flora and biodiversity in each region is paramount
- Preservation of authentic Lebanese culture is critical; however, we seek to create a vibrant environment in these villages that supports increased commerce
- All identified sites must be available to the public



Goal	Objective	Responsibility
Healthy Economy	Grow the domestic visitor industry which contributions to the local economy; maintain & enhance job opportunities; & increase benefits for local communities.	Nurture career development and entrepreneurial opportunities to ensure that all industries benefit from the success of the domestic visitor industry and demonstrate the economic significance of the tourism industry.
Environmental Sustainability	Protect the natural environment and preserve it for future generations.	Practice and promote destination stewardship by reducing waste and environmental impact, increasing energy efficiency and educating visitors on caring for the land.
Cultural Authenticity	Integrate authentic cultural practices into the domestic visitor industry to preserve the unique cultural heritage.	Foster practices that preserve diverse cultures, by involving cultural practitioners in tourism development and expanding opportunities for interaction and cultural exchange between residents and visitors.
Market Knowledge	Proactively manage resources and data to address and adapt to changing market trends and cycles.	Assess market trends and economic cycles to identify and pursue strategic potential markets and encourage diversification of tourism products and visitor segments to ensure economic stability and success.
Host & Guest Satisfaction	Maintain high levels of support and satisfaction among visitors and residents to strengthen “the authentic Aley” brand as a unique, world-class destination.	Engage with the community, industry and visitors to understand and identify balanced solutions that will serve the needs and interests of residents, visitors and domestic tourism economy.
Collaboration	Cultivate respectful and responsive relationships between communities, governments and visitor industry.	Develop and maintain relationships between the visitor industry, government, community and other industries and stakeholders to identify needs and determine mutual solutions that affect tourism industry planning and policies.
Accountability	Develop and implement a comprehensive evaluation system that measures specific results, determines impact, and requires remedial actions that will ensure the success of Aley's domestic tourism economy, environmental and cultural sustainability, and resident-visitor balance.	Be accountable to follow a comprehensive evaluation system and provide strategic analysis and guidance that takes into consideration multiple factors that affect visitor industry success.



APPENDIX F: SAMPLE DATA COLLECTION SHEET

Authentic Aley Producer Questionnaire

Date: _____
Village: _____
Member: _____



Personal Information

1. Name: _____
2. Gender: Male Female
3. Age Groups: 10-20 20-30 30-40 40-50 above 50
4. Mobile Number: _____
5. Family Members: _____
6. Email: _____
7. Website: _____
8. Any social media account: _____
9. GPS Coordinates: _____

About Craft

1. What crafts do you make?

2. What techniques do you use?

3. How long have you been practicing this craft? Yrs.
4. Percentage of the craft income compares to your total income? %
5. What is approximately the annual income from the craft? \$
6. What are the available equipments used to make this craft?

7. What kind of equipments needed to improve your product?



Business Overview

Branding: _____

Marketing Plans: _____

Design: _____

Upgrade in Design Needed: Yes No

Accounting: _____

Product Cost: Yes No Needed Training

Profit % Wholesale %

Clients: _____

Willingness to make part of you residency, a guest house? Yes No

Availability and Condition:

General Observation (living conditions and status)

Additional Comments

APPENDIX G: BUSINESS MODEL CANVAS

Key Partners	Key Activities	Value Propositions	Customer Relationships	Customer Segments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mapping - Certification of attractions - Planning & development - Marketing & communication - Product development - Trainings, tours, markets - Agriculture businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diverse types of tourism - Trained personnel - Increased revenues for businesses & municipalities - Certification adds trustworthiness of businesses - Improves business practices - Increase customer base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General public: Visitor centers, social media, ads - Businesses - Municipalities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General Public - Businesses - Municipalities
	Key Resources	Channels		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Human resources - skilled employees - Branding - Technology Platform - Partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General public: Destination map, tours, markets - Businesses: Training sessions, tours, markets - Municipalities: MOU's, advisory board, meetings 		
Cost Structure		Revenue Streams		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In kind: Promotion, communication, strategy, other human resources - Paid: Promotion, travel, personnel, training resources, website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Travel packages, subscription fees 		



APPENDIX H: STAKEHOLDERS VISION FOR AUTHENTIC ALEY

Authentic Aley envisions a thriving Aley district with a strong economy built on agriculture, tourism, and Aley's unique environment. Below are futuristic goals for the Authentic Aley Strategy under the three core pillars: environment, cultural and economic.

Environmental

Protecting natural resources delivers a healthier and greener tomorrow

- Recreational green areas/zones (e.g., public gardens, hiking trails, reserves)
- Investment in agricultural practices and abandoning agricultural terraces
- Create Master Plan that will preserve and promote our natural resources

Cultural Heritage

Preserving cultural heritage ensures a diverse and prosperous tomorrow

- Promoting local tourism
- Attracting Lebanese Diaspora
- Creating platform for investment opportunities
- Maintaining cultural heritage (e.g., keeping the “look and feel” of villages)
- Mapping Aley attractions sites (e.g., botanical museums, guest houses, tourism guides)
- Creating Master Plan & developing rural activities needed, including infrastructure
- Encourage/build up museums
- Reviving Cultural Heritage through a “sustainable development program”

Economic

Promoting economic development grows a more vibrant tomorrow

- Create more investment/commitment from private and public sectors
- Build participatory approach that will lead to community ownership
- Encouraging the younger generation to invest through developing platforms that engage in community service
- Capacity building/trainings on “how to develop packages”
- Create platform for how to work together
- Establish/execute organize events and festivals linked to Authentic Aley
- Develop products/services promoting Authentic Aley
- Work with academic sector to shift research and scientific evidence for social/economic development curriculum



APPENDIX I: STRENGTHS, CONSIDERATIONS, CONTRIBUTORS

Strengths about Authentic Aley Strategy

Promoting economic development grows a more vibrant tomorrow

- Conserving biodiversity protection of natural resources & mitigating climate change.
- Connecting visitors to Authentic Aley experiences
- Close location to Beirut (e.g., 20 minutes)
- Multiple ecosystems and micro-climate, (0-1500 altitude) that creates beautiful scenery and panoramic views
- Linkages & synergies between public and private sector that will be build a greater strategy plan
- Preserving natural reserves, existence of Religious sites
- Connecting visitors to an Authentic Aley experience
- Engaging Municipalities to the Districts
- Synergy between Private & Public sectors
- Reuniting the community
- Highlighting important people within the community
- Rural development and partnerships with Ministries
- Networking between municipalities, improving B2B (Business to Business)
- Tours and touristic guidelines

Authentic Aley Strategy considerations

- Working with the academic community to translate Authentic Aley Strategy into Arabic
- Organically developing strategy to reunite and regain texture of Aley Community (e.g., religious sector)
- Highlight the importance of people in the area
- Be part of the rural development plan of the Ministry of Tourism
- Municipal leaders could coordinate more with one another & to know each other's attractions
- Relevant Ministries should assign staff member/office dedicated to implementing Authentic Aley
- Creation of an Advisor Board and Facilitating Committees to ensure community involvement on all levels

Authentic Aley Main Contributors

- Ministry of Tourism
- Municipalities
- International Agencies (e.g., UNESCO, UNDP, ILO)
- Members of Parliament
- International NGO's
- Lebanon Franchise Associations
- Authentic Shouf Initiative
- Local NGO's and businesses

APPENDIX J: SOME OF THE PARTICIPATING MUNICIPALITIES

The Union of Municipalities of the Gharb Aala and Chahhar was founded in 2011 and it included nine municipalities, which are Kayfoun, Baysour, Mejdlaya, Dfoun, Remhala, Bsatine, Bennay, Kfarmatta and Ainab. The Union was established with clear and specific objectives, which are: development in all its aspects away from politics and sectarianism and away from all kinds of discrimination among the components of this region.

The Union has expanded today to include 14 municipalities. Despite its novelty, the Union has played a significant role in the development and preparation of several projects, some of which were implemented while others are under implementation.

The convergence between the people of the region and positive interaction between them has had a prominent impact in promoting real co-existence based on respect for others and equality among the people of this region, without any regard to the sect or party, and without any consideration of the geographical size of the towns and villages.

The president of the Union is Mr. Michel Saad (the mayor of Remhala) and the vice president is Dr. Ghazi Chaar (the mayor of Ainab)

Map of the Union of Municipalities





Abey

Abey is a Lebanese village from the villages of Aley district in the governorate of Mount Lebanon, Abey is 15 km from Aley and 22 km from Beirut. 800 meters above sea level. The town of Abey is located at the foot of a mountain known as al-Mutair. It overlooks the capital Beirut and the coast stretching from the Gulf of Akkar in the north to Mount Carmel in the south and the mountains of Cyprus. And the slope lies southward towards the Safa valley, where the Damour River runs.

Abey is an ancient town, its name is Syriac meaning forest or dense trees. It was inhabited by the Tannukhi tribes of Bani Fawares and Bani Abdullah and their descendants in the second half of the eighth century AD. In the tenth century, the Tannukhians managed to establish an emirate in the surrounding mountainous areas known as Mount West. It was the first Arab Islamic emirate on the Lebanese coast to recognize the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad known as the Tannoukh Emirate or the West Emirate.

In the second century AD, the kingdom of Al-Hira in Iraq embraced Christianity on the Nestorian creed; migrated to the north of the Levant and with the Arab conquest embraced Islam like other Arab tribes. In the reign of the Fatimid Caliph, they accepted the monotheistic (Druze) call.

In the late 11th century, the first crusaders advanced in the West. In 1910 the Tannukhi Princes of Beirut confronted and maintained their steadfastness against the crusaders. After their fall in 1910, they managed to defend their empire in the west. Their struggle continued with the crusaders in Beirut and Sidon until they were evacuated from the entire Shami coast in 1291. Where the emirate was headed by princes of the descendants of the Prince Bahtar bin Ali in the Emirate of Bahtariya and its base was Abey.

At the beginning of the fourteenth century the head of the Emirate was Nasir al-Din Hussein, Which the Emirate settled in his days, so he led an urban movement in Abey and Beirut. Poets at the time praised him and the Bahtari princes had great knowledge in science, religion, language, medicine, astronomy, pharmacy and history, and there emerged amongst them many great poets and writers like Prince Saleh bin Yahya author of the book "History of Beirut" and Hamza bin Al-Faqih Chehab Al-Din author of the book "Sidq al-Akhbar".

In the fifteenth century, the emirate witnessed an intellectual movement and scientific renaissance by the most famous scholars like Prince Gamal al-Din Abdulla Tannoukhhi. In his days, Abey turned into a scientific minaret that radiated horizons and received students from all fields who taught other students in their village free of charge.



Ainab

The word “Ainab” may mean “Greenery Spring“ in Syriac language. Its families are: Shaar, Zaidan, Younis, Halawi, Halabi, Abdullah, Abi Shaheen, Al Zarqa, Qashouh, Khoury, Massad, Nawfal, Shaker, and Yazbeck. The first municipal council in Ainab was formed in 1910.

Ainab town is 28 kilometers away from Beirut, the capital of Lebanon, rising 750 meters above sea level and extending over an area of 335 hectares. The total number of permanent residents is about 2,000 people, most of them are young people and the number of voters is 900. The number of the town’s residents increases around 3000 in summer. There is also a large percentage of expatriates where they form around 30% of its population, most of them are in the Gulf States & Latin America.

Of the most prominent non-residential buildings in the town are the St. Elias Maronite Church, the Two Sacred Hearts Nunnery, the municipal building, public elementary school building and the town hall in addition to the three sports clubs.

The green cover constitutes a large proportion of the town, where the percentage of built space is low and does not exceed 40% of the total area of the town. This may be due to the migration of the population. The predominant form of buildings is the rural form. The economic activity is mainly trading of all kinds in addition to a number of workers in liberal professions like engineers, doctors and lawyers, while the agricultural sector is limited and restricted to individual activities. The major cultivated species are pine, olive and fig but there are no agricultural institutions. The problems of this sector lie in irrigation since there is not enough water to irrigate crops. And the industrial sector depends on small businesses. As for the tourism sector, it depends on the summer vacationing and house rentals, and there are Alpine Hotel and Rawabina Restaurant, which are among the most well-known restaurants in the area.

In terms of healthcare, Dr. Mustafa Ghandour donated a permanent equipped clinic to treat people of the town and the neighborhood for free. It is located in the basement of the municipal building, offering free examinations by otolaryngologist, Dr. Pierre Nawfal since July 24, 1999, every Saturday of each week. There is one pharmacy and two clinics in the town. The nearest hospital is Al Shahhar Al Gharbi Governmental Hospital, which is about one kilometer away from the town.

Aley

The city of Aley is located in Mount Lebanon in Aley District of which it is its center, it rises above the sea level of from 7500m to 10000m, and it is 17 km away from the capital Beirut. It is also the capital of the Aley District and one of the largest cities in Lebanon. It is considered one of the famous tourist cities in Mount Lebanon where it played a prominent role in tourism and witnessed a tremendous tourist movement that attracted a large number of kings and Arab and foreign presidents whom they own luxurious palaces and houses in the city. Aley gained prominence when a railroad was built between 1892 and 1895 passing through the town, linking the Lebanese capital of Beirut to Damascus, which provided the residents of Beirut easy means of transportation to the mountains.



As a result of its geographical location which is near Beirut and because of its moderate climate, Aley played an important role as a tourist destination and as a summer resort at the mountain. It gained its important reputation in tourism since Michel Habib Bustros established and built the first place as a summer resort in the year 1885.

In Aley, the oldest municipal council in Lebanon, where the first municipal council was established in 1908, which worked and the successive municipal councils to keep up with the population and commercial growth of the city.

The people of Aley are characterized by the diversity of family and sectarianism and their love and solidarity for the good of the city. This is what was translated especially in the municipal elections in 1998 and a similar consensus in the recommendation of Mr. Wajdi Murad for the presidency of the Municipal Council, which made great efforts and extraordinary to restore the city of Aley its tourist, administrative and development in a few years. The municipal council headed by Mr. Wajdi Murad has been renewed by the city's people for four consecutive electoral cycles. The Municipal Council has worked on developing an integrated strategic plan for sustainable development in the city of Aley during the last electoral cycles to date.

When mentioning the city of Aley, it is also necessary to talk about "The Bride of Summers" in Lebanon and its distinctive geographical position through its moderate climate and its location as a center and its place on the tourist and administrative map as a leading city in most fields and activities and its contribution to the social, economic and tourism development frameworks in the country. The municipal council's interest in securing the elements of the tourism sector in the city led to the opening of the city to the regional and international organizations and the establishment of a wide international network of relations which allowed for twinning with more than one city in the world that began with the Brazilian city of Belem. Which established a special relationship with the Organization of Arab Towns and the International Federation of Cities and Local Governments. The municipal council's interaction with municipalities at home and abroad has also reflected production projects in Aley that contributed to the spread of its name internationally and with donors such as the World Bank, the European Union and the Arab funds.

Bayssour

It is said that the origin of the name Bayssour is Syriac Aramaic, «Beit Yasser», which means a «potter's place» or «pottery maker's place» and it may mean the «wall», especially as it was known for being surrounded by pomegranate trees. Bayssour is characterized by its geographical location, its picturesque nature, and moderate climate. The people of this town are characterized by distinctive customs and traditions and the presence of prominent Sheikhs, intellectuals and famous people in Lebanon and abroad, like His Excellency Minister Ghazi Aridi and Mr. Faris Halim Malaeb who has been mentioned in Guinness World Records. Its families are: Malaeb, Aridi, Al Kadi, Al Halabi and Tarabay.

Its municipality was formed in 1952.

The town is located between 850 and 950 meters above sea level and its total area is estimated by about 7 square kilometers. Bayssour lies on mountainous slopes covered with pine trees.



Its population residing permanently in the town is estimated by 12,000 people. It is bordered to the east by Mejdaya and to the west by Ainab, while from the north it is bordered by Kayfoun and Souk El Gharb and from the south by the town of Remhala- Kabreshmoun.

The majority of the town's permanent residents work in jobs in the public and private sectors and liberal professions in addition to the industrial and agricultural sectors, especially in olive and pine cultivation in addition to vegetables and fruit trees. It has one agricultural cooperative and about 20% of the population work in agriculture and others are interested in private small plantations, while livestock is limited.

For the tourism sector, Bayssour town is characterized by environmental tourist attractions, notably Radar Hill and Bayssour River in addition to monuments, inscriptions and old houses including Roman ruins, an old mill and others, in addition to many restaurants and resorts on the banks of Bayssour River. One of the most prominent touristic activities is Bayssour Tourism Festivals held by the Cultural Social and Sports Association, in addition to the food supplies and crafts.

There is in the town one public middle school and Bayssour Official Secondary School in addition to a private school which is "Najah School" for elementary and intermediate levels; and recently Bayssour Technical School, which is an official technical school providing a variety of specialties has been opened; in addition to many private institutes that give private lessons.

In terms of health care, residents depend on Bayssour Clinic of the Social Services Center or Clinic of Martyr Saleh Aridi that provide the primary health care services. Their competences are public health, dentistry, pediatrics, and gynecology.

There is one center for social services in addition to a number of NGOs which are: Bayssour Charitable Ladies Society, Progressive Women's Union, Sports and Cultural Association, and the Lebanese Association for Development.

Bennay

The origin of the word goes back to the Syriac word "Pane" which means the builders and founders. The people of this town are characterised with their love of science and their developmental ambitions. Its families are Jaber, Wehbe, Shams al-Din, Yehya, Hassan, Hamdan, Nasr, al-Benny, and Daou. It is the town of the Sheikh Akl of Druze Sect, Sheikh Naim Hassan, in addition to many writers, poets, ambassadors, engineers, lawyers and well established people. Nearby towns are kfarmatta, Abey, Ain Ksour, Remhala, and Jisr El Kadi.

Bennay municipality was formed in 1962.

The number of permanent residents of the town is around 2700 that constitute 95% of the total registered people of the town in addition to a small percentage of immigrants, in the past and nowadays.



There are some public buildings in the town including the official school, the municipal building, the Civil Defence Centre, the public hall, as well as some shops which are located in the market in the town square and in the main streets.

Most of the population are employees in the public and private sectors. The other economic activities are limited. Agricultural activity is primitive, where a small number of the population works in agriculture, especially in the cultivation of olives and fruits; there are two olive presses in the town. Along with fruit and olive cultivation, there is pine planting in addition to other crops. Also, there are industrial and commercial activities in the town.

Outside the agricultural sector, the domestic economic activity is associated with securing the needs of the town and there are a number of small businesses.

There is a public school in the town, made up of two buildings, one for the primary level and the second for the intermediate level, in addition to a special building for the nursery.

In terms of health care, residents depend on the town's clinic, which provides primary health care and chronic diseases medications. In emergency cases, residents resort to Al Shahhar Al Gharbi Governmental Hospital.

The social and cultural sector is manifested in the presence of a socio-cultural association with many varied activities including health seminars and exhibitions, educational meetings, and festivals during the summer involving most of the people of the town.

Dfoun

The municipality was established in 1966. The naming of Dfoun is derived from the Phoenician and means "cemetery of Phoenician Nobles". Dfoun town is characterized by maintaining the ancient heritage and the typical village characteristics through its buildings, cleanliness and order. The people of the town of Dfoun are known for their hard work. They have bought all the lands of the village and rebuilt it and they have also worked in the field of food in houses, palaces and hotels and they were very professional.

Dfoun is just 27 kilometers from Beirut, capital of Lebanon, rising 600- 700 meters above sea level. The permanent residents of the town are about 150 people in winter and the number of residents of the town increases in the summer to 400 people. The number registered voters is 1200 people. About 40% of the population are expatriates to several countries notably France, Spain, Colombia, United States, Canada, and Belgium. The semi-rural character dominates the town which is characterized by its old houses (Akd). The Church is one of the public buildings in the town.

Dfoun is known for the cultivation of olives, grapes, figs and pine. The commercial sector is very limited and confined to the town shop. The touristic activities in the town are Saidi Holiday Festival, Assalib Festival and Music Festival. The town has an elite group of lawyers, engineers and doctors. The green cover constitutes a large proportion of the territory of the town. The percentage of built space is low and does not exceed 15% of the total area of the town, noting that the town has begun to witness a remarkable urban expansion in recent years following the main road network.



Kayfoun

The naming of Kayfoun means the stone rock or diminutive of rock or rock idol carved in stone.

It is known by the hospitality of its people, their decent welcoming of guests and kindness. Its families are: Al Hakim, Jawhar, Saad, Dagher, El Haje, Darwish, El Kadi, Ruslan, Serhal, Jaber, Awada, Khalifa, and El Zein.

The municipality was formed in 1954.

Kayfoun is characterized by its location since its western side overlooks the capital Beirut. The town is rich with ancient history since it contains “AL Hosn” ancient castle which has been occupied by successive civilizations like Tanoukhis and Romans. The castle and the surrounding land were put under the supervision of the Directorate of Antiquities in 2004, especially that the town is classified as one of the important summer destinations. The towns neighboring it are: Bayssour, Ainab, Atyat, Shamlan and Souk El Gharb.

The green cover constitutes a large proportion of the territory of the town, where the ratio of built-up area does not exceed 40% of the total area of the town, noting that the town has experienced noticeable urban expansion during the last nine years.

The agricultural activity depends mainly on the cultivation of olives.

It is 21 kilometers from the capital, Beirut, rising 800 meters above the sea level with a total area of 335 hectares (3.35 km²). The population residing permanently in the town is around 1400 people and it increases in the summer to reach 3500 people as it is a nice summer destination. The number of voters is 940 voters. The number of housing units is estimated by 1,450 units spread over 450 residential buildings that are dominated by semi-rural character. There are some public buildings as the official school which is built on a land owned by Kayfoun Charity, a husseiniya, a mosque, the municipal building, a dispensary, and Kayfoun Charity building.

There is in the town one official intermediate school.

In terms of health care, residents depend on the town’s dispensary which is affiliated to the health authority center in which all specialties are available. In emergency cases, residents resort to Al Shahhar Al Gharbi Governmental Hospital – Kabreshmoun.

One of the most active associations in the town is Kayfoun Charity, which was founded in 1931 and is one of the oldest associations in the region, and it manages numerous important cultural and social activities.



Kfarmata

The word “Kfar” means town in Latin and the word “Matta” is Matthew’s Monastery. The history of the city goes back to six centuries and ruins in its neighborhood date back to the time of the

Phoenicians and the Crusaders. It was also home to the Tanoukhi princes. One of the most famous tourist attractions in the town is the silk factory which was built in 1860. In addition to the historical heritage, it is characterized by its location overlooking Beirut which gives its mountainous nature a temperate climate and breathtaking beautiful natural scenery. The people of Kfarmatta are known for their cooperation and its families are: Abu Abdullah, Ai Ammar, Abi Haba, Abu Saad, Haddad, Khaddaj, Al Dib, Rameh, Sawwah, Shammas, Arawi, Al Gharib, Ghallab, Al Kadi, Kawkab, Mosleh, Mouawad, Lahham, Nasir al-Din, Nasr, Harmoush, and Wehbe. The most famous figures of the town are poet Amin Beik Nasser al-Din, the linguist Prince Nadim al-Nasser al-Din, and the nuclear physicist Robert Abi Abdullah.

Kfarmatta municipality was established in 1963.

Kfarmatta is 27 kilometers away from Beirut, capital of Lebanon, rising 700 meters above sea level and extending over an estimated area of 11.6 km². The number of residents of the town is about 5,000 people, while the number of permanent residents is about 4,800 people. The number of registered voters is about 3,000 voters while the number of expatriates is around 200 people, distributed in several countries, including Canada, America and the Arab countries.

The rural character dominates the shape of most buildings and the number of non-residential buildings is six which are a public school, public hall, dispensary, municipal building, two churches and a modern olive press. It is worth mentioning that there was in town a building for Al-Safa Newspaper.

The green cover constitutes a large proportion of the territory of the town. The percentage of built space is low and does not exceed 20% of the total area of the town. Economic activity depends on agriculture, especially the cultivation of olives and citrus fruits in addition to local trade, which is based on small businesses and shops in the town. The industrial sector, however, depends on small firms, including food factories (dairy and cheese) as well as light industries (factory for concrete stones). There are also a number of workers in the liberal professions like engineers, doctors, lawyers, educators, school administrators, restaurant workers and contractors.

The touristic attractions are limited to some ancient monuments and Kfarmatta swimming pools. There is a public school in the town in addition to Kfarmatta Clinic which is affiliated to Cultural Forum Society and was established with the support of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Alwaleed Bin Talal.

There is a number of NGOs in the town including Kfarmatta Development Charity, Women’s Progressive Union, Forum Cultural Society and Kfarmatta Sports Club Kfaramty while there are no international organizations. There is twinning between the town and the Italian city of Martineau.



Mejdlaya

It means the “Inhabitants of the Palace” referring to a Roman Emperor who had glory “Majd” and he had a daughter named “Lea”, which lead to the name Mejdlaya. Its families are Shalabi, Al Fares, Al Kadi, Haider, Ziade, Sobh, Tannous, Matar, and Haikal.

The people of Mejdlaya have values and habits inherited from their ancestors and are characterized by love, solidarity, and cooperation in all matters of life. Mejdlaya characterized as an agricultural town that was heavily dependent on agricultural activity. The municipal council in Mejdlaya was established in 1963. Mejdlaya is just 30 km from Beirut, capital of Lebanon rising 500 meters above sea level and covering an area of 170 hectares. The number of the town's residents is around 3,500 people, where the number of permanent residents of is about 3,000 people and the number of registered voters is 2300 voters. There is also a percentage of expatriates which is about 20%, most of them are in the Gulf States and other countries such as Brazil, Australia, Canada, America and others.

The number of housing units is 500 units spread over 250 building. The rural character dominates the shapes of buildings. The number of permanent residents of the town is around 2700 that constitute 95% of the total registered people of the town in addition to a small percentage of immigrants, in the past and nowadays.

There are some public buildings in the town including the official school, the municipal building, the Civil Defence Centre, the public hall, as well as some shops which are located in the market in the town square and in the main streets.

Most of the population are employees in the public and private sectors. The other economic activities are limited. Agricultural activity is primitive, where a small number of the population works in agriculture, especially in the cultivation of olives and fruits; there are two olive presses in the town. Along with fruit and olive cultivation, there is pine planting in addition to other crops. Also, there are industrial and commercial activities in the town.

Outside the agricultural sector, the domestic economic activity is associated with securing the needs of the town and there are a number of small businesses.

There is a public school in the town, made up of two buildings, one for the primary level and the second for the intermediate level, in addition to a special building for the nursery.

In terms of health care, residents depend on the town's clinic, which provides primary health care and chronic diseases medications. In emergency cases, residents resort to Al Shahhar Al Gharbi Governmental Hospital.

The social and cultural sector is manifested in the presence of a socio-cultural association with many varied activities including health seminars and exhibitions, educational meetings, and festivals during the summer involving most of the people of the town.



Remhala

Its name goes back to Syriac and it is a compound name of “Ram” which means hill and “Hala” which means sand, so the total meaning is “sand hill”. The Municipality of Remhala was formed in 1948.

Remhala is 27 kilometers away from Beirut, capital of Lebanon, rising 440 meters above sea level and extending over 368 hectares. The number of residents of the town is about 3,000 people, where the number of permanent residents is about 1753 and the number of expatriates is about 1247 people who have immigrated to several countries including Brazil, Canada, America, France and others. The number of voters is 1360 voters. The geographical environment still maintains its natural character. Remhala includes in addition to the town Kabreshmoun area, which constitutes an active market in the region. The people of Remhala are known for their cultural and demographic diversity.

The dominant form of buildings is the rural character with some urban additions. The town Remhala has witnessed recently distinctive construction development; and the concentrated population is in Kabreshmoun area which is affiliated to the municipality of Remhala. There are also different religious places in the town, which are the Maronites church, Monastery of Holy Family Sisters and the Protestants Church.

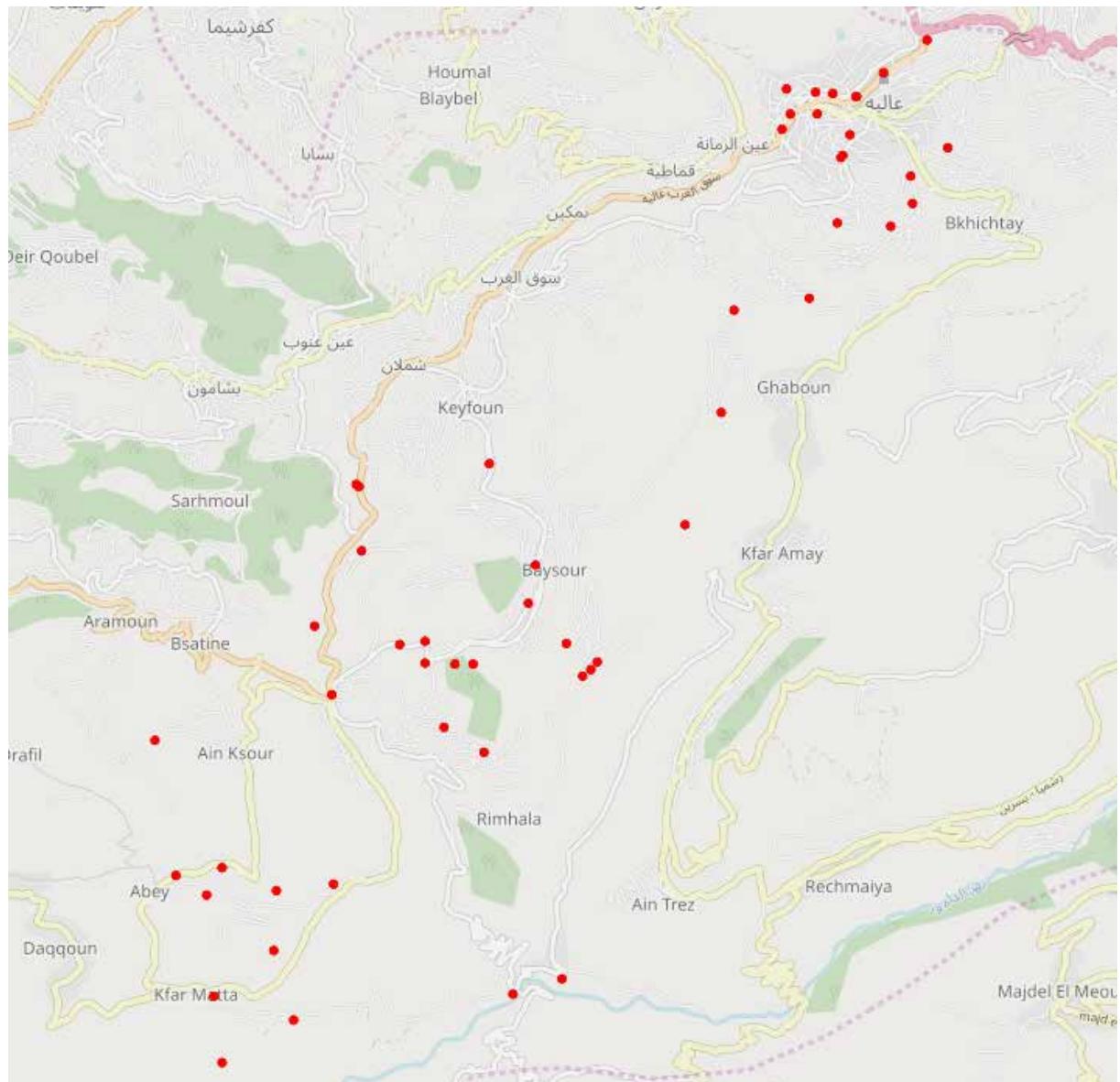
The town of Remhala is rich with springs in addition to the river that separates it from the villages of Selfaya, Bou Zreida and Dwyer Al Rumman. There is Al Jawzat Spring in the town which is rich in water. This abundance of water has led to remarkable agricultural prosperity in the past where many types of crops thrived like olives, grapes, figs, peaches, pears, lemons and walnuts. There are numerous olive presses and agricultural tents in the town. It has also been active in the cultivation of silkworms due to abundance of mulberry trees. The people Remhala have depended on four important seasons which are: olives, different kinds of grain, silkworms and livestock. It has been named “the gold pit” due to the abundance of its crops. These seasons have provided the people with self-sufficiency. Today, agricultural species are lemon, olive and pines and a very small percentage of the townspeople are still working in this sector. As for the educational sector, there is a public school, which is Kabrshmoun- Remhala Official Mixed Elementary School, and a demolished intermediate school destroyed in addition to private schools, like West Hill College and New orient Academy, Cedars Educational High School, New Steps School, and Spring School, in addition to a educational institute.

In terms of health care, there is only one hospital, which is Al Shahhar Al Gharbi Governmental Hospital. It has different specialties including general medicine and surgery, in addition to the newly added Department of Dialysis. This hospital provides basic health services to the region.

There are a number of active associations, including Remhala Women Association, Progressive Women Association of Kabreshmoun, Wafaa Charity, Remhala Club, Al Nasr Club-Kabreshmoun, and Kabreshmoun Traders Association. These associations have many cultural and social activities, including a Kermes for children, seminars and others. As for the tourism sector, there is Mar Mikhael Festival on September 6. Remhala – Aley is one of the largest villages in the area, where it is bordered by the villages and towns of Ainab, Kfarmatta, Mejdlaya, Selfaya, and Baysour in addition to Kabreshmoun, which is considered one of the neighborhoods of Remhala and an extension of it.

Kabreshmoun has witnessed a large urban development at various levels leading it to become a center of many basic life facilities.

APPENDIX K: A MAP OF SOME OF THE ATTRACTIVE SITES





APPENDIX L: USAID CONTRIBUTION

Middle East and North Africa (MENA) economies depend heavily on agricultural production. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Farmer to Farmer (F2F) Program is designed to generate economic growth in the agricultural sector through providing volunteer technical assistance.

In a key example of this support, four experts from the US -- Vickie Andrews, Senior Development Specialist, Dana Gulley, Founder, Third Peak Solutions, LLC, Karen Barnett, Organizational Development Specialist and Lisa F. Larson, Strategy Assessment Specialist – assisted a Lebanese NGO, Green Hand Organization, to develop its internal organizational and technical knowledge aiming at improving its performance and better serving the local communities.. GHO strong commitment to empower people to utilize their cultural assets, including native plants and local commerce, to promote environmental and economic sustainability makes them right organization for this project.

Economic vitality of a country is no doubt a necessary condition for social vitality. Without it, other important factors that make living attractive, such as environmental, agricultural, social, the flow of information and so on, cannot be developed and sustained in the long run. As such, the partnership between US technical experts and GHO provided synergies in the creation of a rural development strategy for the Aley region, "Authentic Aley Rural Development Plan", that addressed the cultural, economic and environmental potentials. These will transform into a practical and sustainable long-term program with the potential of acquiring external investment funds and more external expertise. The well developed entrepreneurial competencies, that are available in this community will provide the projects/programs developed long-term economic growth. As stated by the technical experts "the success of this project was largely due to the cooperation of all stakeholders involved and it has been an honor and privilege to have assisted GHO in attaining this significant achievement".

Accomplishment statement: In partnership with GHO, the four (4) technical experts successfully developed "Authentic Aley Strategic Framework", a rural development strategy, that combines cultural heritage, environment and economic pillars in binding communities to nature and creating economic opportunities.



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