



# GHO Progress Report

By Green Hand Organization



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## Background



Green Hand organization, member of IUCN conducted an interventional work for developing an applicable process for decentralization in Lebanon, by taking a whole district (The Aley District) and work with all the municipalities and union of municipalities to set up a Strategy framework entitled **“Authentic Aley”**.

Authentic Aley is a strategy framework that was built totally in partnership and engagement of all the Stakeholders of Aley District, addresses the IUCN One Programme and the SDGs, and ground up all our work along three pillars: Environment, Cultural Heritage and Economy.

The Authentic Aley received its proof of concept through a mega project funded by UKAID through UNDP Lebanon, to construct and utilize the first Authentic Aley Craft Center – AACC, that governs all the traditional crafts of Aley District. Authentic Aley was presented to the Governmental Council, and received a complete endorsement from the MOE Ministry of Environment, MOT Ministry of Tourism, MOC Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Agriculture, with assigning focal points for follow-up.

Authentic Aley is now stated as the Destination Management Unit for Aley District, that engage the municipalities and unions of Aley District, Syndicate of Lebanese Craftsmen & Authentic Producers, the Private sector, the service providers & beneficiaries, under the management of Green Hand Organization.

The Green Hand Organization has developed various projects to implement the strategy, and to develop the Aley District, among which the Authentic Aley Program **“Climate-Smart Forestry for Healthy Resilient Community in the Aley District”** was development by Green Hand Organization, in coordination with all the Authentic Aley Stakeholders, in guidance of the Ministry of Environment Climate Department and in partnership with IUCN – ROWA, aiming at a high-level strategic project.

The program mitigates climate change smartly, through engagement of Municipalities, Communities, Farmers and other stakeholders actively, to set a momentum of change in decreasing carbon emissions, facilitating a healthy relation with the biodiversity, minimizing chances of forest fires, creating sustainable value chains of forest products, proper agroforestry intervention, integrating ecological farming practices and increasing our ecological footprint.

The program is to set a module of positive change and impact, to be duplicated and progressed in all the country and the surrounding region.

The **“Climate-Smart Forestry for Healthy Resilient Community in the Aley District”** process was developed over the last year through an actively participation and engagement meetings and workshops to result in a structured program, that consider and governs all the details and well-thought-out of all the beneficiaries: the farmers and the economical/ecological trees that should be cultivated, the livestock and the carrying capacity, the workers and the ecological transportation, the winter briquettes and the biomass / the olive oil press residues, the water irrigation and the sustainability / solar energy, the agroforestry tourism and the trails / community engagement / forest engagement, the composting units and the clean farming / production, the producers and organizing COOPs for right reservation and prosperity.

## Executive Summary

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The Green Hand Organization proudly presents its Progress Report, a reflection of a year marked by resilience, innovation, and community-first action under the Authentic Aley Strategic Framework. With a firm belief in people-centered development, we have deepened our roots in the Aley district—empowering vulnerable communities, particularly women—while advancing holistic, inclusive, and sustainable models of local development.

For the first time in Aley's modern history, a structured alliance of stakeholders—including Green Hand, GIZ, UNDP's Make-A-Project, and the Authentic Aley Craft Center (AACC)—has been successfully launched to build an integrated network of support for farmers, beekeepers, craftsmen, and rural producers. These programs offer both technical and post-harvest services and pathways to long-term economic self-sufficiency.

### **Highlights from the year include:**

The inauguration of the Authentic Aley Post-Harvesting Center and Food Process Center, offering cutting-edge production, packaging, and value-chain support.

The launch of the Authentic Aley PPP (Public-Private Partnership) with FDA registration, enabling local products to be legally exported to the United States—a historic milestone for regional producers.

The conduction of community engagement programs like: Authentic Aley – Healthy Water Streams and Food-Security Achievement by Reinstating Honey-production and Agroforestry-practices – FARHA, by EU Hawkamaa and GIZ, offers concrete integration of water preservation, agroforestry and beekeeping as resilience measures for climate change mitigation and economic development.

Enhanced cooperation with municipalities and NGOs through community-driven training leading to job creation, attainment at “50,000 people reached”, “297 families supported”, and “500 women vulnerable trained”.

Continued promotion of nature-based solutions—agroforestry, sustainable beekeeping, and ecological processing—all aligned with IUCN principles and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Driven by a benevolent passion for social contribution, Green Hand has never confined its mission to Aley alone. Since 2016, we've united 30 municipalities from Aley to Jisr Al-Kadi under one governance framework, developing a sophisticated investment map with the support of international experts. Our strategy respects environmental frameworks, preserves cultural heritage, and fuels inclusive economic growth. Initiatives like the Baz Authentic Market, mobile botanical garden, and various artisan and agro-processing hubs demonstrate our multi-sectoral commitment to cultural, environmental, agricultural, and educational progress.

This year was distinguished not only by structural accomplishments but also by groundbreaking moments of social harmony. One shining example was our flagship cultural gathering: the “Large Family Reunion.” In the midst of the 2024 conflict, Green Hand brought together families from across Mount Lebanon and South Lebanon, uniting all religious and cultural backgrounds under one dignified canopy of peace and shared heritage. Each family prepared their own authentic and traditional dishes, which were presented in an upgraded, high-standard setting arranged by Green Hand. Avoiding political discourse and steering away from intolerance, this unique initiative served as a true embodiment of intercultural and culinary exchange—a celebration of Lebanon’s diversity and shared identity through food.

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As we move forward, we reaffirm our commitment to integrity, intercultural harmony, and the pursuit of lasting impact. From reviving dormant sectors to mobilizing families, youth, and local governance, the Authentic Aley strategy is becoming a national model for sustainable rural transformation.

We close this year with deep pride in our collective achievements and renewed resolve to extend our impact, with clean hands, a clear purpose, and communities always at the center of all we do.



## Message from Chairman

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As we reflect on another year of tireless dedication and impactful work, I am honored to present this message on behalf of Green Hand Organization in our Annual Progress Report.

Since 1999, Green Hand has held steadfast to its founding values: transparency, inclusivity, and a profound commitment to community-driven development. This year, more than ever, we reaffirm our promise to serve without bias or discrimination—working hand-in-hand with every individual, every family, and every community that crosses our path.

Our efforts throughout 2023–2025 have been anchored in the Authentic Aley Strategy Framework, an ambitious, homegrown model that not only addresses immediate socio-economic challenges but also lays the foundation for a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable future. Through initiatives like the Authentic Aley Craft Center, the Post-Harvesting Center, the Pioneer Pack and Process Center and the Public-Private Partnership through an FDA and FSVP registering, we continue to offer concrete, practical solutions that empower vulnerable groups, particularly women, while reinforcing community ties across cultural and geographic boundaries.

We are not just implementing projects; we are nurturing a movement—one that binds community relations, strengthens local capacity, and celebrates the diversity of our region. Authentic Aley is becoming a structured Development Decentralization role model—not just for Mount Lebanon—but for all of Lebanon. A model rooted in sustainability, participation, and long-term impact.

In alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and inspired by the nature-based solutions of the IUCN, we are ensuring that every action we take contributes to a healthier planet and a more just society. Our environmental projects, agroforestry programs, and food processing facilities all embody our belief that nature and community are not separate concerns—they are deeply interlinked.

We enter the coming year with the same clean hand and clear purpose that has defined us since the beginning. And with the strength of our team, our partners, and the communities we serve, we will continue to move forward—united, transparent, and hopeful.

With deep gratitude and commitment,

Zaher Redwan



Chairman, Green Hand Organization

# Organizational Overview



## Mission & Vision

Green Hand Organization (GHO) envisions a world where cultural heritage, biodiversity, and community resilience are not only preserved but serve as catalysts for inclusive, sustainable development.

Our mission is to empower vulnerable communities—especially women, smallholder farmers, and displaced populations—through nature-based, locally rooted solutions that integrate environmental protection, cultural revival, and sustainable livelihoods. We aim to reconnect people to their land, heritage, and each other by fostering environmentally sound economies and inclusive growth models that are aligned with global standards such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and IUCN's Nature-based Solutions framework.

## Core Values

At the heart of GHO's work is a values-driven culture that shapes every decision and initiative:

- Impact-Driven: We focus on tangible results that transform lives and landscapes.
- Action-Oriented: We believe in acting thoughtfully and efficiently, prioritizing community needs over rhetoric.
- Inclusive Citizenship: We foster solidarity, unity, and tolerance across Lebanon's diverse communities.
- Integrity & Passion: We are hardworking individuals committed to continuous improvement—personally, professionally, and collectively.
- Collaborative Spirit: We thrive in cross-sectoral partnerships with public, private, and civil society actors to maximize our reach and relevance.
- Diversity & Non-Sectarianism: We celebrate cultural, regional, religious, and political diversity, ensuring our spaces remain inclusive, equitable, and safe for all.

These values fuel our commitment to ethical action, social cohesion, and ecological justice.

## Organizational Structure



Green Hand Organization is structured to deliver high-impact, community-driven programs across Lebanon. Officially registered in 2003, the organization operates under a decentralized yet coordinated model through four thematic commissions:

- The Biodiversity Commission: Focuses on conservation, reforestation, and habitat restoration using local species and ecosystem-based management.
- The Medicinal, Edible, and Aromatic Plant (MEA) Commission: Revives native plant knowledge and promotes herbal-based enterprises to enhance community health and income.
- The Green Home Commission: Supports sustainable household production, waste reduction, energy alternatives, and eco-friendly practices at the community level.
- The Educational Commission: Drives environmental education, skills training, and public awareness campaigns to empower youth and adults alike.

These commissions operate through a network of field hubs and partnerships with municipalities, cooperatives, local NGOs, and technical experts. GHO's flagship regional model—the Authentic Aley Strategy—embodies this integrated approach, serving as a scalable template for regional development that unites environmental, cultural, and economic objectives.

GHO's governance includes a Board of Directors, an Executive Management Team, and decentralized technical working groups. This structure ensures adaptability, participatory planning, and efficient delivery, rooted in the lived realities of Lebanon's most vulnerable communities.



## Programmatic Achievements



### Authentic Aley Craft Center – AACC

Location: Aley District – Partners: UKAID, UNDP and UOM

#### Objective

To establish a vibrant, inclusive space for cultural and economic empowerment by revitalizing traditional crafts and supporting artisan-led production through skills development, market access, and sustainable enterprise models in the Aley district.

AACC aims to preserve Lebanon's endangered craft heritage while creating dignified income-generating opportunities for women, youth, and vulnerable producers across the region. The center is a key pillar in the Authentic Aley Strategic Framework and serves as a model for rural creative economies rooted in cultural identity.

#### Achievements

**Physical Infrastructure Completion:** Despite severe economic instability and material shortages, the center was constructed and fully equipped with workshops, training rooms, and exhibition areas—achieving operational status in under 12 months.

**Capacity Building:** Trained over 150 women and youth artisans in traditional crafts such as embroidery, mosaic, pottery, and soap making through a series of intensive workshops led by master artisans.



**Market Access:** Facilitated participation in four exhibitions and secured three ongoing sales partnerships with local boutique.

Community Engagement: Hosted cultural events and craft showcases attended by over 1,000 community members, enhancing intergenerational knowledge sharing and community pride.

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Partnerships: Strengthened collaboration with UNDP and UKAID, Municipalities, positioning the center as a replicable model for cultural resilience in Lebanon.

## Impact Stories

### Resilience in the Face of Crisis

In the midst of Lebanon's most severe economic crisis, inflation, and widespread public sector collapse, the successful completion of the Authentic Aley Craft Center stands as a remarkable achievement. What began as a hopeful vision was transformed into a fully functional reality, providing a safe and dignified space for artisans to thrive—even when basic building materials, fuel, and electricity were scarcely available.

The center's realization during such turbulent times became a symbol of resilience not only for Green Hand Organization, but for the entire Aley community.



This milestone demonstrates the power of community-driven development: when cultural identity becomes a source of economic strength, even the most fragile contexts can produce lasting hope and transformation.

## Climate-Smart Forestry for Healthy Resilient Community in the Aley District

Location: Aley District – Partners: IUCN, MOPW, MOE and Municipalities

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### Objective

The Green Hand Organization has developed various projects to implement the Authentic Aley Strategy and to contribute to the sustainable development of the Aley District.

The “Climate-Smart Forestry for Healthy Resilient Community in the Aley District” program was developed by Green Hand Organization, in coordination with all Authentic Aley stakeholders, under the guidance of the Ministry of Environment’s Climate Department, and in partnership with IUCN – ROWA.

This high-level strategic project aims to mitigate climate change smartly, by actively engaging municipalities, communities, farmers, and other local stakeholders to set a momentum of change in reducing carbon emissions, facilitating healthy interaction with biodiversity, minimizing the risk of forest fires, creating sustainable value chains of forest products, promoting proper agroforestry interventions, integrating ecological farming practices, and increasing the ecological footprint in a sustainable and impactful way.

The program is designed to serve as a replicable and scalable module of positive change and impact, with the ambition to expand it across Lebanon and the wider region.



### Achievements

Developed a structured, participatory, and comprehensive climate-smart forestry program over the last two years through active engagement, meetings, and workshops with stakeholders. Defined and mapped the needs and priorities of farmers, agroforestry practitioners, and land users, considering sustainable practices and resilient tree species selection.



THE MINISTER

Beirut, 07/07/2022  
Ref: IUCN/LEB/2022

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)  
Dr. Harry El Sharif  
Regional Director  
Email: [www.iucn.org](mailto:www.iucn.org)

Subject: Concept Proposal entitled "Climate-Smart Forestry for Healthy Resilient Community in the Aley District" to be submitted to GCF-SAP

Dear Dr. El Sharif,  
In reference to your dated June 2, 2022 (Ref: IUCN/VA/AD/099/022), the Ministry of Environment endorses the project and all outlined activities of the GCF - SAP "Climate-Smart Forestry for Healthy Resilient Community in the Aley District" that was developed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature - Regional Office for West Asia (IUCN-ROWA) in collaboration with the Green Hand Organization, under the Authentic Aley strategy framework. In addition to climate action at the level of municipalities, fall within the priorities represented in Lebanon's 2020 NDC Update.

We encourage IUCN-ROWA, based on IUCN experience in GCF in general, to proceed in applying the approved concept that fits a national need to GCF SAP's funding window.

Sincerely yours,

  
Minister of Environment  
Nasser Yassin



CC:  
- Department of Public Relations and External Affairs - MOE  
- Service of Environmental Technology - MOE  
- Service of Environmental Planning - MOE  
- Department of Air Quality - MOE  
- Climate Change Projects - MOE

Laid the foundation for a full ecosystem integration plan, including:

- Cultivation of ecological and economically valuable trees.
- Regulation of livestock carrying capacities to ensure environmental balance.
- Promotion of ecological transportation solutions for workers and farmers.
- Valorization of biomass residues and olive oil press waste into sustainable winter briquettes.
- Development of efficient, sustainable irrigation systems integrated with solar energy solutions.
- Introduction of agroforestry tourism initiatives with eco-trails and forest engagement activities.
- Support for composting units and promotion of clean farming practices.
- Organization of producers and farmers into structured cooperatives to safeguard rights and promote prosperity.
- Initiated strong community-based conservation efforts, raising awareness and ensuring active involvement in forest management and protection.

## Authentic Aley Food Process Center – AAFC

Location: Aley District – Partners: UOM, USAID Baladi Cap

### Objective

To empower rural women and vulnerable community members by providing a fully equipped, professional-grade facility dedicated to traditional Lebanese food processing. The AAFC aims to preserve culinary heritage while enhancing economic resilience through the production of artisanal food products such as jams, pickles, syrups, vinegars, and pastries. It serves as a key driver of women-led entrepreneurship and sustainable agro-food innovation in the region.



### Achievements

**Facility Launch in Challenging Times:** Successfully established and operationalized the AAFC in Baysour despite Lebanon's ongoing economic collapse, currency devaluation, and logistical constraints—marking a significant community-driven milestone.

**High-Standard Infrastructure:** Equipped with state-of-the-art cooking machinery, sterilization units, gas and electric cooking stations, mixers, baking ovens, and stainless-steel prep areas that comply with food safety and hygiene standards.

**Capacity Building for Women Producers:** Trained over 70 women from the Aley region in traditional food processing techniques, product safety, packaging, and entrepreneurship.

**Culinary Heritage Revival:** Produced more than 30 authentic products rooted in Lebanese culinary traditions, such as rose petal jam, pickled eggplants (makdous), grape vinegar, and herb-infused oils.

**Income Generation & Market Access:** Enabled participating women to launch small food businesses or integrate their products into cooperatives and markets under the Authentic Aley label.

**Community Anchor for Food Innovation:** Positioned AAFC as a cultural and economic hub that not only preserves food traditions but fosters modern agro-processing enterprises.

## Authentic Aley Post-Harvesting Center – AAHC

Location: Aley District – Partners: UOM, SIF and GIZ

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### Objective

To establish a decentralized, service-oriented post-harvesting center that supports agroforestry farmers, herbal producers, and local cooperatives in extending the life, quality, and market value of their raw agricultural products. The AAHC aims to strengthen ecological value chains, promote sustainable processing techniques, and ensure farmers have access to the essential infrastructure needed for drying, grinding, distilling, mixing, and packaging—while aligning with green energy and circular economy principles.



### Achievements

**Functional Facility Setup:** Successfully launched the AAHC with multi-line processing capabilities, including machines for dehydration, shredding, grinding, herbal distillation, and vacuum and jar packaging.

**Farmer & Cooperative Engagement:** Served over 45 smallholder farmers and herbal producers, enabling them to process and package their yields locally with professional-grade equipment and safety protocols.

**Herbal Product Innovation:** Enabled the production of ecological pest control (EcoPest) solutions, dried herbal teas, powdered mixes, and essential oils—helping diversify income sources for farmers and cooperatives.

**Quality & Shelf-Life Extension:** Provided critical infrastructure for improving the hygiene, shelf life, and aesthetic value of locally grown agroforestry products, thus increasing competitiveness in local and export markets.

**Training & Technical Support:** Delivered targeted trainings in post-harvest handling, food safety, sustainable harvesting, and green processing methods to more than 80 participants, with a special focus on women and youth.

**Solar Energy Integration:** Initiated the phased implementation of a solar power system to reduce operational costs, ensure energy reliability, and align with environmental sustainability goals.

**Strategic Positioning within the Authentic Aley Strategy:** Recognized as a cornerstone facility for agroecological transformation in the region, complementing other Authentic Aley infrastructure (such as the AAFC and AACC) to create a cohesive, localized value chain.

## Authentic Aley Pioneer Pack and Process Center – AAPC

Location: Aley District – Partners: UOM, GIZ and SEAL

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### Objective

To establish a pioneering, centralized food-grade facility that strengthens local agroecological production systems by offering professional-grade packaging, labeling, processing, and compliance services for small-scale producers, cooperatives, and entrepreneurs across the Aley district and greater Beirut. The AAPC aims to ensure product quality, traceability, and competitiveness in domestic and export markets while promoting inclusive, women-led value chains in the agri-food sector.



### Achievements

**Infrastructure Development:** Completed the core infrastructure and setup of the center, including packaging lines, labeling equipment, food-safe storage units, and compliance stations in alignment with food safety regulations.

**Producer Readiness:** Engaged over 20 small producers and cooperatives in onboarding sessions, introducing them to packaging standards, branding elements, and technical requirements for local and regional markets.

**Complementarity with AAFC & AAHC:** Positioned the AAPC as the final step in the integrated value chain, creating a bridge between artisanal food production (AAFC) and agroforestry-based harvesting and processing (AAHC).

**Market Integration:** Began pilot packaging for herb blends, pickles, honey, herbal teas, and za'atar mixes to test market receptivity and ensure consistency across labels, barcoding, and expiration handling.

**Quality Assurance Framework:** Established protocols for traceability, batch coding, and shelf-life assessment to support farmers and producers in meeting the requirements of supermarkets, boutique shops, and online stores.

## Authentic Aley Public-Private Partnership – AAPP

Location: Aley District – Private Partner: Levantine LLC – under the brand Beirut Spice Co.

### Objective

To establish a cutting-edge export-oriented facility that bridges rural Lebanese agro-food producers with international markets through a strategic public-private partnership (PPP). The AAPP aims to offer FDA and FSVP-compliant processing, labeling, and export services, enabling local producers—particularly women-led microenterprises—to access the global market while upholding safety, quality, and cultural authenticity.



### Achievements

**International Market Access:** Successfully launched Lebanese artisanal products—including za'atar mixes, herbal teas, dried herbs, and spice blends—into the U.S. market under the Beirut Spice Co. brand.

**E-commerce Presence:** Products from the AAPP are now available on the Beirut Spice Co. online store and through Amazon Prime, offering global visibility and high-value return for community-made goods.

**FSVP & FDA Compliance:** The facility is fully registered with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and adheres to the Foreign Supplier Verification Program (FSVP), ensuring all exported goods meet stringent international safety and labeling standards.

**Local Impact with Global Reach:** Over 15 local producers and cooperatives have contributed to export batches, benefitting from technical training, quality control support, and international branding exposure.

**Economic Empowerment:** The AAPP model has led to sustainable income streams for rural producers, providing dignified livelihood opportunities and boosting regional production capacity with a focus on women's participation.

## Climate-Resilient Livelihoods for Food Security – FARHA Initiative

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Location: Aley District – Partners: GIZ and Municipalities

### Objective

To enhance food security and climate resilience through the revival of agroforestry systems and sustainable honey production practices, supporting vulnerable farmers and beekeepers in Lebanon's highland communities. The project aims to reintroduce diversified, ecologically sound land management methods while securing income sources and empowering local producers with practical tools to adapt to environmental and economic pressures.



### Achievements

**Revitalized Agroforestry Practices:** Over 40 farmers were equipped with knowledge/inputs needed to restore agroforestry plots, combining trees, herbs, and seasonal crops in climate-adaptive systems.

**Sustainable Honey Production:** Beekeeping training and equipment distribution benefited local apiculturists, leading to the restoration of abandoned apiaries and an increase in honey yields with improved quality control.

**Community-Based Post-Harvest Services:** Through integration with the Authentic Aley Post-Harvesting Center (AAHC), FARHA beneficiaries gained access to value-added services such as herb distillation, drying, and eco-pesticide support.

**Women's Participation & Livelihoods:** A substantial portion of the training and input distribution targeted women farmers and household producers, contributing to gender-balanced resilience and localized food security.

**Sustainability Pipeline:** The project successfully entered a second-phase pipeline with SEAL, with GIZ's support, expanding the scope and sustainability of the intervention into broader networks.

**Environmental Stewardship:** The reintroduction of mixed cropping and indigenous tree species helps mitigate soil degradation, enhance biodiversity, and build carbon sinks, contributing to long-term climate adaptation goals.

## Mobile Green Hand Botanical Garden – mGHBG

Location: Mobile Vehichle – Partners: IUCN, Aley Municipality and Private Sector

### Objective

To promote environmental awareness, plant biodiversity conservation, and ecological education through a mobile and interactive botanic garden. The initiative aims to reach children, youth, and communities with limited access to environmental infrastructure, enabling climate education, plant knowledge, and agroecological awareness in a hands-on, mobile format.



### Achievements

Developed and Deployed Lebanon's and World's First Patented Mobile Botanical Garden: The mGHBG was fully equipped and launched as a traveling educational unit, bringing plant biodiversity displays, eco-workshops, and sensory experiences directly to rural schools and public spaces.

Reached Over 2,000 Beneficiaries in Its First Year: Including students, teachers, and local families who engaged in workshops on native plants, medicinal herbs, pollinator-friendly gardens, and climate-smart agriculture.

Towards Integration into School Curricula and Public Events: Collaborated with local schools and municipalities to incorporate environmental education into extracurricular programs and community festivals.

Increased Engagement with Climate and Biodiversity Topics: Post-event feedback and follow-up surveys indicated a significant increase in understanding of ecological interconnections, plant uses, and conservation needs, especially among children aged 8–14.



## Authentic Catering

Location: All Lebanon – Partners: Private Sector

### Objective

To create a community-based, resilient food service operation that both empowers women and responds to crisis and large-scale needs by providing healthy, traditional, and dignified meals. Authentic Catering aims to bridge social support and economic empowerment through a professional catering service capable of serving up to 2,000 meals per day.



### Achievements

Established a Central Kitchen: equipped with necessary industrial-grade cooking facilities, high-esteemed food stations and buffet setting for events, and staffed by a network of 14 trained women, ready to scale operations quickly based on demand.

Adapted to Lebanon's Crisis Context: During economic downturns, mass displacement, and critical emergencies, Authentic Catering became a pillar of food security, providing thousands of meals to those in urgent need.

Served Diverse Clientele: From NGO-led humanitarian food distributions to private celebrations, weddings, and official public events, Authentic Catering demonstrated professional-grade flexibility and reliability.

Scalable Daily Capacity of 2,000 Meals: Able to respond rapidly to emergencies while maintaining food safety, quality, and traditional culinary values.

Promoted Women's Economic Empowerment: All catering activities are managed and executed by women from the community, transforming culinary heritage into sustainable income streams.

Launched "Authentic Taste" as a Brand Identity: Reinforcing the cultural identity and culinary richness of the region through consistent presentation, flavor, and community engagement.

## Authentic Aley Cultural Gathering of Unity – The Family Reunion

Location: Aley District – Partners: MCC, Sadr Foundation and Private Sector

### Objective

The Family Reunion initiative was born out of a critical moment during the 2024 war, when social cohesion and national morale were under immense pressure. Green Hand, in partnership with the Sadr Foundation, the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and key actors from the private sector, envisioned a unifying event that would transcend politics, religious divides, and social stress. Its goal was to rekindle community spirit through shared heritage, culinary exchange, and cultural pride.



### Achievements

This one-of-a-kind event gathered families from Mount Lebanon, the South, and surrounding regions—representing Lebanon's diverse religious and cultural tapestry—into a high-level, welcoming space organized and facilitated by Green Hand. Families were invited to prepare and share their authentic traditional dishes, contributing to a beautiful mosaic of Lebanon's food heritage. The event setup included professional catering stations, elegant communal dining arrangements, and spaces designed to reflect warmth, dignity, and mutual respect. All arrangements were offered in-kind by Green Hand, under the Authentic Aley Strategy Framework.

Successfully engaged dozens of families from diverse sectarian backgrounds in a non-political, inclusive cultural celebration.

Promoted intercultural dialogue and respect through food—a universal language of unity and peace.

Fostered a renewed sense of national identity centered on coexistence, community, culinary heritage.

Strengthened collaboration with cultural and faith-based institutions and local businesses who contributed in-kind support.

Created an innovative, peaceful counter-narrative in the middle of crisis—showing Lebanon's capacity to heal from within.

## Authentic Aley Tourism Department – AATD

Location: Aley District – Partners: Lebanese Ministry of Tourism, UOM and Abey Municipality

### Objective

To establish a decentralized, community-based tourism hub in the heart of Aley District that promotes sustainable, cultural, and environmental tourism under the Authentic Aley Strategy. The department aims to curate, guide, and promote tourism experiences rooted in local heritage, crafts, gastronomy, and nature while supporting local livelihoods.



### Achievements

Successfully launched the Authentic Aley Tourism Department in Abey, serving as the official tourism point for the region.

Developed and distributed tailored promotional material highlighting eco-tourism, agrotourism, and cultural attractions across the Aley region.

Built a regional tourism database of experiences, guides, guesthouses, hiking trails, and culinary spots.

Hosted several tourism coordination workshops with municipalities and local guides to align efforts and build capacity.

Became the go-to reference for tourism inquiries and coordination in Aley, with rising visibility at both the local and national levels.

## Authentic Aley Boutique Shop

Location: Aley District – Partners: Private Sector

### Objective

To preserve and elevate the legacy of Aley's only surviving herbalist and spice shop—Baz Authentic Market, established in 1945 and family-owned by the Chairman and Founder of Green Hand—by transforming it into a flagship retail platform that promotes authentic Lebanese products and sustainable livelihoods through the Authentic Aley Strategy Framework.



### Achievements

Successfully revived and relaunched a three-generation family-owned herbalist shop, turning it into a living heritage space that bridges history with modern sustainability.

Became a central retail outlet for over 200 farmers, producers, artisans, and craftspeople engaged in Green Hand's diverse value chains under the Authentic Aley Strategy.

Showcased traditional and contemporary Lebanese herbal, culinary, and wellness products, while maintaining the unique identity of the original spa and herbalist experience.

Provided direct market access for rural women, smallholder farmers, and heritage craftspeople by featuring their goods in a prime, story-rich retail space.

## Authentic Aley Healthy Water Streams

Location: Aley District – Partners: EU HAWKAMAA, Municipalities and Private Sector

### Objective

To promote water conservation and direct climate change mitigation in the Aley region by integrating awareness, practical interventions, and infrastructure solutions that enhance household water efficiency, protect natural water streams, and reinforce the sustainable use of water resources.



### Achievements

Reached over 50,000 indirect beneficiaries and 20,000 direct beneficiaries through comprehensive awareness campaigns, educational sessions, and hands-on activities focused on water conservation and climate change adaptation.

Successfully linked households in Bsous village to the main sewage system, preventing environmental hazards and protecting both groundwater and surface water quality.

Delivered more than 5,000 household water-saving kits, enhancing water efficiency practices at the community level.

Raised community resilience and behavior change through interactive workshops, field-based trainings, and public engagement on the relationship between water, hygiene, and climate change mitigation.

Supported the environmental sustainability pillar of the Authentic Aley Strategy, with measurable long-term environmental and public health impacts.

## Authentic Aley Tangible Heritage Program

Location: Aley District – Partners: Lebanese University, Municipalities and Private Sector

### Objective

To document, assess, and preserve the tangible heritage assets of Abey as a foundation for building a comprehensive nomination file for potential recognition as a World Heritage Site, ensuring the safeguarding of Abey's historical, architectural, and cultural legacy for future generations.



### Achievements

Conducted a comprehensive heritage assessment of Abey, identifying key tangible heritage elements including historic buildings, traditional houses, religious sites, and public spaces.

Developed an initial heritage mapping and inventory, providing a baseline for future conservation and restoration planning.

Initiated the first phase of the World Heritage Site nomination preparation, setting the foundation for Abey's alignment with UNESCO heritage criteria.

Raised community awareness and local engagement around the value and importance of tangible heritage, empowering residents to become custodians of their town's legacy.

Integrated the Tangible Heritage of Abey project within the broader Authentic Aley Strategic Framework, ensuring its sustainability and alignment with national and international heritage preservation standards.

## Authentic Aley Intangible Heritage Program

Location: Aley District – Partners: LARI, MOA, Universities, Municipalities and Private Sector

### Objective

To preserve, revitalize, and transmit the intangible heritage of the Aley region, focusing particularly on agricultural knowledge, traditional Arabic medicine practices, spice recipes, and artisanal markets, securing this living heritage for future generations and reinforcing community identity and resilience.



### Achievements

Documented and safeguarded traditional agricultural practices, including heirloom seed preservation, traditional planting, harvesting methods, and indigenous agroforestry knowledge.

Revived and promoted the knowledge of traditional Arabic medicine, working through the Baz Authentic Market — a unique, family-owned herbalist shop dating back to 1945, now serving as a hub for traditional medicine and spice heritage conservation.

Created Authentic Market Days and Cultural Exhibitions to bring community members together around food, spices, remedies, and agricultural traditions, ensuring the transmission of traditional knowledge to younger generations.

Supported the intangible culinary heritage by linking traditional food processing (through facilities like the Authentic Aley Food Process Center) to broader cultural preservation efforts.

Positioned the boutique shop as a keystone of both local tourism and intangible-cultural preservation, linking economic empowerment with regional identity. Integrated over 200 farmers, producers, artisans, and craftsmen into programs that support the preservation of their intangible skills, recipes, and craftsmanship through direct market access and visibility within Baz Authentic Market and Authentic Aley initiatives.

### Income & Expenditure

- The income and expenses are presented for two fiscal years (2023 and 2024).
- Income mainly came from project grants and donations.
- Major expenditure categories include:
- Program implementation (projects, workshops, equipment)
- Administrative costs (salaries, office operations)
- Facility management (centers, kitchens, post-harvest units)
- The expenditures were aligned closely with the income, maintaining financial discipline across projects.

### Funding Sources

- GIZ (German Agency for Development Cooperation)
- EU through the "Hawkamaa" program
- SEAL USA (in pipeline and some confirmed support)
- Private Sector Partnership (example: Levantine LLC through Beirut Spice Co.)
- Local fundraising and contributions from Green Hand's extended network (donations and in-kind support)

### Financial Health

The organization maintained a stable financial status with a positive balance at the end of the period.

Currency Fluctuation Management: Green Hand applied a smart approach to manage Euro/USD conversion rates to minimize loss.

The financial strategy included diversification of funding sources, control of operational costs, and securing partnerships, which strengthened the resilience of Green Hand even during the Lebanese economic crisis.

### Community Involvement

- Green Hand placed strong emphasis on active community engagement across all projects and initiatives.
- More than 4500 community members were directly involved through awareness sessions, participatory planning workshops, and capacity-building activities.
- Women, youth, and vulnerable groups were prioritized in several programs, particularly in the Authentic Aley Food Process Center, Authentic Catering, Authentic Aley Pioneer Pack & Process Center, and Authentic Market initiatives.
- Communities played a key role in shaping local interventions, especially regarding water stream conservation, intangible heritage preservation, and agroforestry practices under the FARHA project.
- Community feedback was regularly gathered through open meetings and informal discussions to adjust programming to real-time needs.

### Partnerships

Green Hand successfully strengthened strategic partnerships at multiple levels:

- International Agencies: GIZ, EU (through Hawkamaa), SEAL USA, and others, providing financial and technical support.
- Public Sector: Signed agreements with the Ministry of Tourism and collaborated with several municipalities and municipal unions of Aley District.
- Private Sector: Developed innovative public-private partnerships like the collaboration with Levantine LLC (Beirut Spice Co.), creating market access for Green Hand's beneficiaries locally and internationally.
- NGOs and Local Actors: Worked hand-in-hand with MCC, ACTED, LebRelief, and other community-based organizations to expand reach and effectiveness.

### Volunteer Contributions

Volunteers remained at the heart of Green Hand's work:

- Over 80 volunteers contributed to the successful implementation of activities during 2023–2024.
- Their roles included logistical support, awareness raising, fieldwork, and technical expertise sharing (particularly for agroforestry, food processing, and catering services).
- Special volunteer engagement was recorded during environmental and cultural activities, notably under the Mobile Green Hand Botanic Garden and Authentic Heritage Conservation Programs.
- Volunteer efforts were crucial to sustaining activities during periods of limited mobility and economic hardship.

### Methodology

Green Hand adopted a mixed-method Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) approach to ensure the relevance, effectiveness, and accountability of its programs:

- Baseline Assessments were conducted at the start of each project, particularly for FARHA, Authentic Aley Healthy Water Streams, and the Intangible Heritage Preservation initiatives.
- Regular Field Visits and Observations were carried by project teams and technical consultants.
- Focus Group Discussions and Beneficiary Feedback Sessions were organized with farmers, women producers, artisans, and local stakeholders to gather qualitative insights.
- Monthly Progress Reports and Quarterly Evaluations were integrated into project cycles to track outputs, outcomes, and areas for adjustment.
- Impact Stories and Case Studies were documented to capture qualitative success factors, particularly under high-challenge contexts (e.g., economic crisis, political instability).

### Key Findings

Green Hand's community-centered model resulted in high ownership by beneficiaries, increasing the results sustainability, especially in agroforestry, food processing, and cultural preservation projects.

Public-private partnerships (e.g., GHO collaboration with Beirut Spice Co.) significantly amplified market access for beneficiaries and demonstrated resilience against local economic volatility.

Direct interventions such as the Healthy Water Streams project had measurable environmental and health impacts, with tangible improvements recorded in household water management practices.

Youth and women empowerment showed the strongest growth trends, particularly through food production centers and authentic catering initiatives.

Despite logistical and financial challenges, project completion rates exceeded 90%, a strong indicator of the organization's operational resilience.

### Lessons Learned

Flexibility in programming was critical to adapting quickly to shifting circumstances, particularly during periods of crisis and political uncertainty.

Multi-stakeholder engagement (community, public sector, private sector) enriched project outcomes and opened unexpected avenues for collaboration and funding.

Hands-on capacity building (e.g., training women in artisanal food production, traditional knowledge transmission) proved more effective than purely theoretical sessions.

Continuous beneficiary engagement throughout the project life cycle enhanced project ownership and long-term impact.

Investment in internal systems (monitoring tools, financial tracking, impact documentation) is a priority moving forward to further strengthen transparency and scalability.

## Future Outlook

### Strategic Goals

Expand the Authentic Aley Strategy across new villages and communities, deepening the model's integration of environment, economy, and culture for greater regional resilience.

Strengthen climate change mitigation efforts by scaling up agroforestry, water conservation, and eco-friendly post-harvesting technologies.

Enhance food security systems by expanding facilities like the AAFC and the AAPC, while opening more pathways for women and small farmers to access premium markets.

Preserve and promote intangible heritage, especially Arabic herbal medicine, traditional agriculture, and artisanal crafts through broader educational and commercialization programs.

Solidify public-private partnerships to ensure sustainability and open global market opportunities for local products.

### Upcoming Projects

Launching the Authentic Aley Craft Center (AACC), activating a hub for traditional crafts, artisanal production, academy and technical school and community training, enhancing local livelihoods and cultural preservation.

Launching the EmpowerHer Program, a women-focused initiative aiming to empower craftswomen, small-scale producers, and women-led SMEs through livelihood opportunities, skill development, and market access support.

Scaling FARHA into a second phase with broader agroforestry adoption and beekeeping support, pending the next GIZ cycle.

Launching the Authentic Catering brand to provide new income streams for women chefs and traditional food producers

Developing the Authentic Aley Tourism Circuit, connecting cultural sites, eco-tourism initiatives, and authentic local businesses under one destination marketing strategy

Pursuing World Heritage nomination for tangible heritage sites in Aley, starting with the Abey village file advancement.

### Call to Action

Green Hand invites donors, partners, and local stakeholders to join hands in sustaining this model of community-rooted resilience, climate-smart innovation, and heritage preservation.

Together, we can amplify the voices of small producers, protect our natural and cultural treasures, and build a dignified, sustainable future for all generations.

Support Green Hand's journey. Invest in authenticity, resilience, and hope.



# GREEN HAND

binding community to nature

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