



Forestry Department

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Forest Management Working Paper

The “*Hima*” A Revived Traditional Forest Protection and Management System: the case of Lebanon

**Based on work by
Fady R. Asmar
Consultant**

April 2009

**Forest Resources Development Service
Forest Management Division
Forestry Department**

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SUMMARY

As in most Mediterranean countries, wood in Lebanon does not constitute a major forest product. In addition to charcoal, non-wood forest products are the main income generating activity from the forests and several rural communities depend on these products for their living. These are mainly pine nuts, carob pods (for the production of edible molasses), aromatic and medicinal plants and grazing. The current expansion of ecotourism, agri-tourism and rural tourism is leading to a sharp increase of the role of the forests in poverty alleviation. The appropriate management of the forests and other wooded-lands would play a very important economic role, allowing for the sustainable harvesting of wood and non-wood products and for the provision of services with a high market value, such as eco-tourism. This sustainable management would have a direct and tangible effect on the different efforts aiming at poverty alleviation.

The objective of this study is to introduce the “*Hima*” concept, which is an ancient natural resources conservation system currently being revived; it is used as a tool for multi-purpose forest management. In order to better illustrate the concept and its applications, two pilot zones are considered for this case study: Ebel-es-Saqi, South Lebanon, and Kfar Zabad in the Beqaa Valley in Central Lebanon. Ebel-es-Saqi has already benefited of extensive studies and is being managed since 2003, whereas Kfar Zabad is just starting.

The Society for Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL) has initiated the application of the “*Hima*” concept as a tool for forests, other wooded lands and natural resources management. SPNL has realized the importance of the revival of the concept for the protection, conservation and sustainable management of Important Bird Areas. This resurgence of “*Hima*” is benefiting of the support of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Environment. Local communities have adopted the initiative and international Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are providing substantial assistance.

The aim of the project is to create job opportunities for the local communities through ecotourism, protection of nature, and preserving traditions and heritage.

- Protection of birds, particularly migrating birds.
- Protection of the eco-system, fauna and flora.
- Long term autonomy and management of the project by the locals.
- Use of the site by the local and regional community for recreational, conservation, educational and scientific purposes.
- Sustainable use of the forest and other wooded lands (OWL) in and around the “*Hima*”.

The objectives of the management plans developed with the local stakeholders are:

- Protection of birds in general and migrating birds in particular.
- Protection of the ecosystem biodiversity.
- Long term autonomous management of the project by the community.
- The use of the site by local and regional communities for: Conservation, education, scientific research, recreation purposes and expanding economic opportunities.

As the initiative is just starting (2003) the results cannot be measured yet. The war in the summer 2006 and the current political crisis the country is going through are slowing down the process and are inhibiting the economic development of the sites. However, the communities are still managing the resources and protecting them.

The revival of the system is rather recent in Lebanon. Its use as a tool for multi-purpose forest and natural resources management may be very efficient; therefore its application is still too recent to be evaluated. It is still too early to draw lessons and to evaluate the reasons for success or failure.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Country Brief

The Republic of Lebanon is situated on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. It covers a total area of 10,452 km² most of it being mountainous. The Mount-Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon chains run parallel to the sea, separated from each other by the Bekaa plain. The population of Lebanon is estimated to be around 4 million, of which about 1 million are foreigners.

Lebanon's climatic conditions are determined by its geography and physiography. They vary from Mediterranean climate along the coastal plain and in the middle mountain range, to reach the sub-alpine or mountain Mediterranean climate on the highest slopes, covered by snow during most of the year; they become sub-deserted and almost too dry for agriculture in some of the northern plains.

As in most countries submitted to the Mediterranean climate, most of the rainfall falls between November and March, in the form of heavy showers. The mean annual rainfall on the coast ranges between 700 and 1,000 mm; it peaks in the central mountains at 1,600 mm; it ranges in the Bekaa plain from 200 mm in the north-eastern part to 800 mm in the southern part; while on the Anti-Lebanon chain it ranges from 600 mm to 1,000 mm in the Hermon.

The soils are new, friable and easily eroded, most of the country being on slope terrain. Relief, rainfall intensity and runoff contribute to the severe water erosion and soil loss, especially where the vegetation cover is reduced or lost.

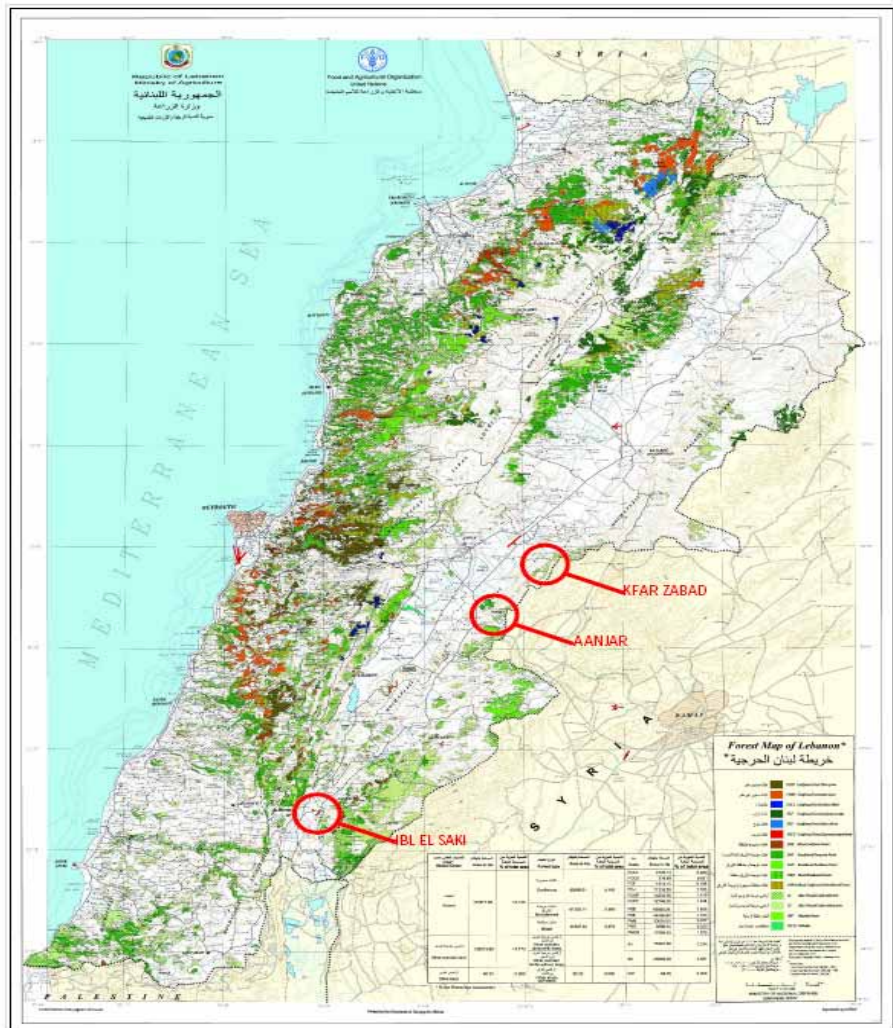
Forests in Lebanon constitute an important natural resource. The main forest species widespread in Lebanon are *Quercus calliprinos*, *Quercus infectoria*, *Quercus cerris* var. *pseudo-cerris*, *Juniperus excelsa*, *Cedrus libani*, *Abies silicica*, *Pinus pinea*, *Pinus halepensis*, *Pinus brutia* and *Cupressus sempervirens*. The bulk of the forest area consists of Oak and Pine stands. In addition, the Lebanese forests contain a wide range of aromatic, wild, and medicinal plants.

1.2 Natural Forest Areas

Thanks to the assistance of FAO through a technical cooperation project, the National Forest and Tree Inventory and Assessment of Lebanon (TCP/LEB/2903), the first forest and tree resources inventory has recently been achieved, showing the following results:

- Forests cover 136,500 ha, or 13.12% of the surface area of the country.
- OWL cover 106,000 ha, or 10.2% of the surface area of the country.
- Other lands with tree (including fruit and olive trees) cover a surface of 113,000 ha or 10.8% of the surface of the country.
- Coniferous forests cover an area of 43,936 ha, broadleaves forests 77,230 ha and mixed forests 15,282 ha.

Figure 1: The forest map of Lebanon and the sites of the case study



The country consists of two major Mediterranean climate zones, the Mediterranean zone and the pre-steppe areas, harbouring ten bioclimatic regimes and 22 vegetation associations.

Figure 2: The Legend of the forest map

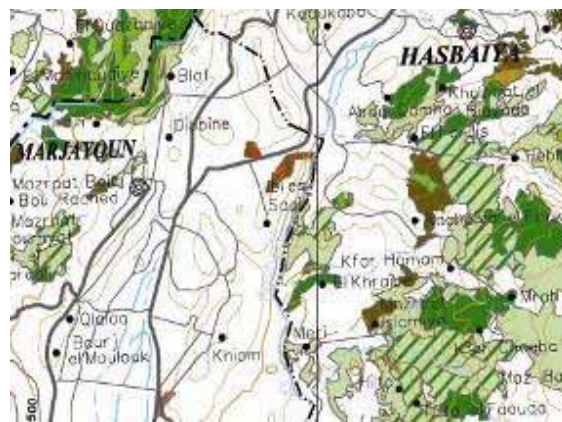


The Mediterranean mountains in their seaward aspects can be differentiated along the altitude into the Thermo-Mediterranean, Eu-Mediterranean, Supra-Mediterranean, Mountainous Mediterranean and Oro-Mediterranean zones. A belt of evergreen maquis

and garrigue¹ characterizes the formers, while the later are respectively covered by summer-green forest climax and dwarf thorny vegetation characterizing the alpine and sub-alpine zones.

The Thermo-Mediterranean zone, ranging 0-500 m altitude, comprises, at the sea level, a coastal strip once harbouring two plant communities currently severely degraded. Plant community degradation is also shown in the upper vegetation characterized by an evergreen garrigue. In this zone *Ceratonia siliqua*, *Pistacia lentiscus* and *Pistacia palaestina* trees grow along with their accompanying flora.

Figure 3: A close-up view of Eble-es-Saqi site on the forest map showing the dominant forest types



At an altitude ranging from 500 to 1,000 m, lays the Eu-mediterranean zone, mainly covered by maquis vegetation dominated by *Quercus calliprinos* and *Pistacia palaestina*. The climax oak maquis has almost disappeared and has been replaced by a degraded garrigue. Additionally, Pine forests (*Pinus pinea* and *Pinus brutia*) are largely found in these areas together with the associated species to the oak maquis like *Cercis siliquastrum*, and *Styrax officinalis*.

The Supra-Mediterranean zone (1000-1500) situated above the evergreen vegetation is characterized by a deciduous forest climax. In this zone, the vegetation cover is denser as the population density is lower and major human settlements are more recent. At present, this zone is occupied by *Quercus calliprinos* and *Q. infectoria*, *Pinus brutia* and *P. pinea* formations.

A higher zone of coniferous forest climax, ranging from 1500-2000 m altitude, replaces usually the zone of the summer-green forest. This mountainous Mediterranean zone harbours relic formations of *Cedrus libani*, *Abies cilicica* and *Juniperus excelsa*. Plant

¹ **Garrigue:** low, soft-leaved scrubland found on limestone soils around the Mediterranean basin, usually near the seacoast. *Garrigue* is a French term and the most common term for shrublands known as *phrygana* (Greece) and *tomillares* (Spain). Typical vegetation includes juniper trees and stunted holm oaks; aromatic lime-tolerant shrubs such as lavender, rosemary, wild thyme and *Artemisia* are common garrigue plants.

communities encountered comprise *Quercus cedrorum*, *Q. calliprinos*, *Ostrya carpinifolia*, *Sorbus flabellifolia*, *Malus trilobata*, *Prunus ursina* and *Pyrus syriaca*.

In the high summit dominating the Mount Lebanon chain, lie the Oro-Mediterranean zones where the leading plant community is xerophytes vegetation comprising a formation of cushion-like dwarf thorn shrubs and *Juniperus excelsa*, the only tree present at this altitude. In these alpine uplands, a high endemism level is marked as the result of the isolation effect.

Figure 4: Eble-es-Saqi from Google Earth showing the forest and its importance in the surrounding landscape



The Eastern Mount Lebanon foothills are steppic and desiccated. They are either occupied by a heavily degraded garrigue or barren, and the sub-deserted soils support a poor, overgrazed rangeland.

The pre-steppic vegetation zone ranging between 1000 and 1500 m is mainly composed of heavily grazed forestlands of *Q. calliprinos*. In the Supra-Mediterranean zone, *Q. calliprinos* and *Q. infectoria* are found. Then follows sparse *Juniperus excelsa* stands, which extends to higher altitude and figures as sporadic tree mixed with dwarf thorny shrubs. However, the dominant formation on these slopes is a degraded garrigue used for grazing. On the Western slopes of the Anti-Lebanon chain, the pre-steppic vegetation is

similar to the one present on the eastern slopes of the Mount Lebanon chain. However Mount Hermon presents some particularities including the presence of endemic species such as *Ferula hermonensis*, locally known for its medicinal properties.

1.3 Plantations

During the 1960-70's, one of the main objectives of the Government of Lebanon, in terms of forest development has always been to reach a level of 20% of forest cover in the country. Despite the reforestation and afforestation efforts, this objective was not achieved. However, the figures provided through the National Forest Assessment programme show that the total surface area of the woodlands exceeds this 20% objective (Forests + OWL = 23.22%). Different objectives should now be set, based on realistic facts and figures. Reforestation/afforestation remains a must, but the objectives should be set differently, and most importantly, the availability of lands to this purpose should be identified.

Forest plantations undertaken at the country level during the 1960-70's and interrupted during the civil war (1975-1990) include mainly indigenous species. The largest plantations are composed of *Pinus pinea* raised for the production of the pine nuts. Those plantations date back to the 1940's during the French mandate. Plantations of various species like *Pinus brutia*, *Pinus halepensis*, *Cedrus libani* and *Cupressus sempervirens* were undertaken in the 60s and 70s. The main objective of these plantations was the rehabilitation of the vegetation cover. Poplars are sometimes planted in different areas, mainly in the Beqaa valley, for small industries and as fuelwood. A reforestation plan is currently being implemented by the Ministry of Environment, while some reforestation and afforestation initiatives are undertaken by the Ministry of Agriculture and some active NGOs.

Figure 5: A close-up view of Kfar Zabad and Anjar from the Forest Map showing the forest types in the region



1.4 Overview of the Social, Economic and Environmental Importance of the Forestry Sector

Lebanon is a highly populated country with the bulk of the population living in the urban areas. In the past Lebanon was crowned by forests which were used for timber production, fuel-wood, grazing, hunting, recreation and other forests products and services. Cedar wood was lavishly used despite the deep belief that God has planted Cedar trees in Lebanon. Currently, the situation is witnessing a positive reverse, as all around the country people are calling for the reforestation and the conservation of the vegetation cover. Forests are playing an important social role with the rise of ecotourism and environmental concern. Although uncontrolled urban expansion has destroyed many landscapes, the concern for the social and aesthetic values of the forest is gaining a great importance.

As in most Mediterranean countries, wood does not constitute a major forest product, despite the fact that some of the Lebanese species, like the cedars, the junipers and some oaks could produce a high quality wood. However, the present structure, cover and distribution of the forests do not allow for such a production. Several rural communities still depend on fuel-wood and on charcoal production. In addition to charcoal, non-wood forest products are the main income generating activity from the forests and several rural communities depend on these products for their living. These are mainly pine nuts, carob pods (for the production of edible molasses), aromatic and medicinal plants and grazing. The current expansion of ecotourism, agri-tourism and rural tourism is leading to a sharp increase of the role of the forests in poverty alleviation. The appropriate management of the forests and other wooded-lands would play a very important economic role, allowing for the sustainable harvesting of wood and non-wood products and for the provision of services with a high market value, such as eco-tourism. This sustainable management would have a direct and tangible effect on the different efforts aiming at poverty alleviation.

1.5 Protected Areas

Protected areas in Lebanon are currently under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Environment, although some forms of protection and conservation (protected forests) are still under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Lebanon now features seven nature reserves (Protected areas) established by law, covering about 207 km² or 2% of the Lebanese territory, each with a distinguished richness of species. Several other Protected Areas were also declared by Ministerial Decrees such as Natural Sites, World Heritage Sites, areas protected by municipalities and private initiatives.

A traditional form of protection, the “*Hima*”, was once prevailing in Lebanon and in other countries of the region. This form of protection has given birth to an institutionalized demand driven forest protection. In such cases protection is requested

from the Ministry of Agriculture by the owners or the local community groups to prevent grazing, wood harvesting or quarrying. Although not very common anymore, this form of protection is still being applied but not monitored.

After having disappeared during several decades, the traditional “*Hima*” system is currently being revived by a local NGO in collaboration with local community groups and international NGOs and with the support of the Ministries of Agriculture and Environment.

2 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY AND BRIEF HISTORY OF THE “HIMA” REVIVAL PROCESS

The objective of this study is to introduce the “*Hima*” concept an ancient conservation system currently being revived, as a tool for multi-purpose forest management. In order to better illustrate the concept and its applications, two pilot zones are considered: Ebel-es-Saqi, in South Lebanon and Kfar Zabad in the Beqaa Valley in Central Lebanon. Ebel-es-Saqi has already benefited of extensive studies and is being managed since 2003, whereas Kfar Zabad is just starting.

The potential environmental and aesthetic significance of the forest of Ebel-es-Saqi was noted by the United Nations Interim Forces of Insurrection in Lebanon (UNIFIL), having taken Ebel-es-Saqi village as their headquarters in 1986. With the post-war reconstruction in South Lebanon, UNIFIL took the initiative of proposing to the UN Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA) to protect the forest of Ebel-es-Saqi and to utilize it for recreational purposes.

Realizing the potential of the pine woodland of Ebel-es-Saqi in providing much needed economic opportunities for the local community, the Social Development Division of ESCWA, under the theme of Post Conflict Reconstruction in South Lebanon, commissioned an independent consultant from the American University of Beirut to undertake an evaluation of the forest of Ebel-es-Saqi with a view to proposing a development plan.

After a thorough scientific and socio-economic study for two years, the AUB team proposed the use of Ebel-es-Saqi forest as an Ecological Park. Based on this view, a management plan was suggested for the utilization of the pine forest of Ebel-es-Saqi to accommodate nature conservation concerns while promoting economic opportunities for the local community.

To further complement the above mentioned conservation efforts, assessment studies, and conservation plans, Mercy Corps Organizations subcontracted the SPNL for further specialized research on the region, and for the implementation of the actual project.

Figure 6: Kfar Zabad and Anjar from Google Earth showing the importance of the sites in the surrounding arid landscape



Based on a thorough ecological and socio-economic field research of the site and the village, scientific evidence showed the potential of the site as an Important Bird Area (IBA) and a bottleneck for the migration of birds between Europe and Africa, with a possibility of international importance.

Taking into consideration this ecological importance, a Master Plan for the IBA site was produced. Eco-tourism experts were consulted in order to better develop the concept of the project and to use this IBA site to expand economic opportunities for the community of Ebel es-Saqi through the promotion of ecotourism and sustainable environmentally friendly income-generating activities. All these shall be based on the active participation of the local community in the conservation of the site and for their own benefit.

The idea of reviving the “*Hima*” was emerging.

Table 1: Characteristics of the forests in the case study: Lebanon

Name of the forest	“Hima” Ebl-es-Saqi	Kfar Zabad – Anjar
Land tenure	Government (Ministry of Agriculture) managed by the local community	Government (Ministry of Agriculture) managed by the local community
Ecozone	Mediterranean – Semi-Arid (Eu-Mediterranean Zone)	Mediterranean – Semi-Arid (Eu-Mediterranean Zone; Pre-steppic Mediterranean)
Forest type	Planted conifers	Riparian and OWL
Extent of the forest (ha)	Forest: 38.2 ha; OWL: 97ha	500 ha
Forest area under management (ha)	Idem	Idem
Management started	2003	2005
Designated functions of the forest under management	Recreation, Pine nuts harvesting, bird watching, Important Bird Area	Recreation, grazing, bird watching, Important Bird Area
Tree taxa	<i>Pinus pinea</i> , <i>P. halepensis</i> , <i>Cupressus sempervirens</i> and riparian species such as <i>Alnus orientalis</i> , <i>Laurus nobilis</i> , <i>Salix alba</i> , <i>Salix libani</i> and <i>Platanus orientalis</i>	<i>Quercus calliprinos</i> , <i>Amygdalus sp.</i> , <i>Pistacia palestina</i> , <i>Pyrus syriaca</i> , and riparian species such as <i>Fraxinus syriaca</i> , <i>Populus alba</i> , <i>Salix alba</i> and <i>Salix libani</i>
Other taxa	<i>Quercus calliprinos</i> , <i>Asphodellus microcarpus</i> , <i>Poterium spinosum</i> and riparian species such as <i>Nerium oleander</i>	Riparian species such as <i>Typha latifolia</i> , <i>Iris pseudacorus</i> , and different grasses
Location of the forest (including longitude and latitude)	South Lebanon, Altitude 760m, Latitude 33°21'26''N, Longitude 35°37'35''E	Both Kfar Zabad and Anjar fall in the Zahleh Caza – Bekaa Mohafazah at an altitude ranging between 850-1000 m; Anjar Latitude 33°43'36''N, Longitude 35°56'02''E; Kfar Zabad Latitude 33°47'08''N; Longitude 35°59'36''E
URL	www.spnl.org	www.spnl.org
Contact organization	Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL) spnlorg@cyberia.net.lb	Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL): spnlorg@cyberia.net.lb

3 OBJECTIVES OF THE MANAGEMENT OF THE RESOURCE AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PRODUCT OBTAINED THROUGH THE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The objective of the management of the resource is the application of the “*Hima*” system in IBA while benefiting of the forest resource for non-wood forest products, recreation and tourism. This will strongly contribute to the protection of the resource and to the improvement of the livelihood system in the concerned area. However, the main product remains the protection of the resource as an IBA.

3.1 Aim and Objectives of the Management

The aim of the project is to create job opportunities for the locals through ecotourism, protection of nature, and preserving traditions and heritage.

- Protection of birds, particularly migrating birds;
- Protection of the eco-system, fauna and flora;
- Long term autonomy and management of the project by the locals;
- Use of the site by the local and regional community for recreational, conservation, educational and scientific purposes;
- Sustainable use of the forest and OWL in and around the “*Hima*”.

3.2 Background

In this part of the world, nature conservation does not always take the same form that it does in the West. Some areas are protected by custom or unwritten convention. While the status of these areas is fully binding in the countries where they exist, it is not always recognised by international conservation authorities. The “*Hima*” is one of the traditional conservation tools very particular to the region.

Since Antiquity, the Middle East has known some form of nature conservation. It appears that the ancient Egyptians had a grasp of their environment and its needs some 5000 years ago. The Roman Emperor Hadrian issued a decree protecting parts of the Cedar and other coniferous forests of Lebanon as early as the 1st century AD.

More recently, but as way back as 1500 years ago, the “*Hima*” came to existence in the States of the Arabian Peninsula and certain other Arab and Islamic countries. The “*Hima*” is an ancient system of community-based protected areas and possibly the oldest known organised form of conservation in the world. The “*Hima*” is a type of common property in which local stakeholders control use of the common property of a community in order to conserve water and vegetation in times of environmental hardship. “*Hima*” is a collective term that encompasses a broad spectrum of areas where living and non-living natural resources are protected and managed by local people for the benefit of the community. In Arabic, the term “*Hima*” means “protected area”, “reserve” or “multi-purpose area” where local people and wildlife are the primary beneficiaries. By

preserving such essential resources as forests and grazing lands, the “*Hima*” has played a vital role in the struggle to conserve the region’s limited resources.

In the past there were thousands of “*Hima*”, especially on lands owned by village communities of the Hijaz and Asir highlands of Saudi Arabia. There, “*Hima*” areas ranged in size from a few to several thousand hectares and their use was regulated by complex, largely unwritten rules. Nowadays only a few “*Hima*” survive a circumstance due mainly to rural depopulation, changes in rangeland use and the imposed weakening of tribal structures during and since the 1960s.

Historically, “*Himas*” employed many sound land-use principles and tested many of the ecological and socio-economic aspects now considered essential to the sustainable use of renewable resources, such as:

- Allowing the controlled use of natural resources and making sure that those natural resources were conserved properly.
- Ensuring that “*Himas*” were respected by allowing the local communities who managed them to apply social sanctions.
- Distributing the benefits of the “*Himas*” among members of the community according to a system that the community perceived as equitable.

The legal system that governed the “*Himas*” was based primarily on the right of users to benefit from the natural resources of a given area (usufruct). However, the users were given responsibility for the proper management of the resources. The legal institutions managing “*Himas*” were also required to establish models and incentives that would promote the beneficial use of those protected areas and their resources. The legal rules varied to suit the needs of time and place.

3.3 Types of “*Hima*”

There are five main types of “*Hima*” reserves:

- Areas where grazing of livestock was banned and where the cutting or collection of grass was strictly regulated.
- Areas where grazing was restricted to certain seasons and open to certain domestic animals.
- Areas set as beekeeping reserves where grazing was restricted during pollination and where grazing was permitted for part of the year.
- Areas of woodlands where the cutting of trees was forbidden.
- Areas set aside as reserves for the welfare of a village, town, or tribe.

Another classification of “*Himas*” was as follows:

- Section “*Hima*”: Used and controlled by several (up to 10) small villages (50 households) of the same tribal section.
- Village “*Hima*”: Used and controlled under the sole prerogative of a single village.
- Individual “*Hima*”: Usually much smaller than section or village “*Himas*”, they are reserved by individuals as private pastures.

3.4 The “*Hima*” in the Region

All “*Himas*” had a common formula for conservation; a blend of traditional agricultural methods, environmental conditions, and social factors, to sustain natural resources. The key factors were draft animals used in farming, and seasonal drought. Many *Hima* were reserved in order to maintain a steady supply of fodder for those animals, in addition to being a strategic reserve in drought periods. The collapse of traditional farming methods all but sounded the death knell for the “*Hima*” system. Consequently, many “*Himas*” were abandoned and regulations were lessened, which allowed shepherds to utilize the rich and diverse vegetation cover in the protected zones. The diminished tribal and community power added to new circumstances. However, it is worth mentioning that some villages and tribes have maintained their “*Hima*” as part of their tribal identity and heritage.

3.5 The “*Hima*” and the Religions

Islamic law, rooted in the Koran and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, recognized the importance of conservation and laid down an elaborated system by which humans could make use of ecosystems while preserving natural resources. Islamic law made provisions for the safeguarding of ecosystems and the incorporation of the “*Hima*” into the legal systems to protect pasture, range land, areas around wells, water resources, and the protection of fauna and flora.

One provision of Islamic law is the Waqf, or endowment for charitable purposes dedicated in perpetuity to the cause of God. A Waqf is a piece of inalienable public property that serves the common good. Inspired by Islamic law, Waqfs have been used to create mosques, churches, convents, schools, hospitals, and other public works since time immemorial, yet very few have been set aside for conservation purposes. In Lebanon, almost 30% of the total land area of the country is Waqf lands, owned by the different religious groups, Christians, Druzes or Muslims.

3.6 The Revival of the “*Hima*”

The concept of the “*Hima*” system and the pragmatic flexibility inherent in the management of “*Hima*” provide an important cultural precedent for the protection and sustainable use of natural and cultural resources.

In Lebanon, until the beginning of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975, municipalities were still managing their municipal lands as “*Hima*” hiring rangers from the local communities to protect their resources, the local farmland and the yields. A large number of areas that were designated as “*Hima*” are not functioning as such anymore. This is due to the migration from rural areas and the abandonment of agriculture. However, thanks to the SPNL, and in collaboration with the concerned municipalities, Lebanon is witnessing a revival of this ancient institution, with the creation of “*Hima*” in Ibl es Saqi (the last Lebanese stopping place for migrating birds before Hula in Israel), and in the Kfar Zabad

wetland in the Bekaa valley. These two particular “*Hima*” are also important IBA, designated as such by Birdlife International. A third site is currently being implemented in a coastal zone.

3.7 The Future of the “*Hima*”

This ancient institution may have an immense potential if properly developed. Grazing lands, other wooded lands and some forests might be rehabilitated; some species may be protected. Perhaps the most important aspect of the “*Hima*” concept is to synthesize the need for conservation and multi-purpose forest management for non-timber production with the many ways in which they can be of benefit to the public. The reviving of the “*Hima*” system must be done in a selective manner.

The “*Hima*” system, if revived, would be a tremendous step towards conservation in the Middle East, and a unique synthesis of tradition and modernity. It would enjoy four vital advantages:

- Multi-purpose management
- Ecological sustainability
- Economic viability
- Acceptability by the local people.

The “*Hima*” is a traditional protected area system involving the sustainable use of natural resources by and for the local communities surrounding the “*Hima*”, thus indirectly benefiting the conservation of biodiversity as well as the natural and cultural heritage of the area. As mentioned earlier, the “*Hima*” is a regional practice extending from North Africa to Central Asia, with a tremendous cultural heritage and the indigenous knowledge related to it. Ultimately, the “*Hima*” practice could be considered as one of the viable responses for achieving sustainable development in our region.

The limited ownership of the local communities within the current centralized system of protected areas has resulted in limited benefit sharing with local community groups. Stronger support is foreseen for the “*Hima*” practice as a viable and sustainable alternative to nationally designated protected areas. The increased involvement of local communities and the benefits derived from protection will ultimately result in improved status of the natural resources themselves.

The overall goal of the “*Hima*” revival is to mesh traditional practices with recent conservation science as a way to reach sustainable development.

3.8 “*Hima*” and IBAs

Important Bird Areas are identified on the basis of biology and geography. Designation as an IBA does not mean that a site is, or should be, protected under any formal mechanism, neither does the list of IBAs in itself constitute a conservation plan.

In Lebanon, it is neither feasible nor desirable to designate every IBA as a formal Protected Area. Resource limitation, conflicting land ownership and high opportunity costs in productive landscapes often make this difficult. Also, formal Protected Area designation may not necessarily be the most effective approach to site-based protection, especially where many people live in and/or use an IBA. Indeed, in some circumstances, formal Protected Area designation could be counter-productive to conservation objectives, particularly where current Protected Area regulations (i.e. Nature Reserve) restricts traditional land and natural resource use practices that are compatible with or contribute to the biological value of a site.

In such circumstances, alternative approaches to site-based protection of IBAs are needed. These could include community-managed conservation areas, or private reserves, through voluntary agreements with land owners, tribes and religious groups. They could be classified as “*Hima*”, thus complementing the Nature Reserve Category.

In many cases, the approach may be cost-effective and help to engage support from sources not used or available to Nature Reserves. “*Hima*” status may also provide greater opportunities for sustainable human use of natural resources, and therefore, make a greater contribution to poverty alleviation for people whose use of natural resources forms a critical component of their livelihood strategies.

3.9 Importance of the “*Hima*”

The value of traditional practices and local knowledge is increasingly recognized by the conservation community worldwide. These practices represent both the values of local people and the wisdom they have accumulated through centuries of adaptation to their environment as they:

- Help alleviate poverty, empower local communities and support democracy.
- Have great pragmatic value for the conservation and equitable sustainable use of natural resources.
- Are expressions of faith, morality and law, the roots of environmental ethic?
- Help conserve key Biodiversity Areas (KBA), IBAs, and other landscapes outside the Nature Reserve Category (especially on municipal, tribal, religious and private lands).
- Provide numerous ecosystem goods and services, often contributing significantly to human livelihoods (e.g. fishermen, farmers, shepherds and collectors of non-timber forest products).
- Recognize the importance of local community organizations (Site Support Groups (SSG) for in situ biodiversity conservation.

3.10 Site Support Groups (SSGs)

- IBAs are about birds and “*Hima*” are about people and biodiversity. By linking these two concepts the BirdLife Partnership has created a major concept in site based conservation.

- The SSGs of the IBA are local community groups who strive to conserve IBAs through sustainable management of the sites. Such action brings grass roots engagement, community participation and results in improved livelihoods. It also creates a constituency for conservation and ensures the long term protection of the site.
- “SSG” is a generic term used to describe groups of local stakeholders who share a common commitment for the conservation of an IBA. SSGs are networked together to promote exchange of experience and skills.
- The motivation of SSG members may derive from the economic, cultural, religious, recreational or livelihood-supporting values of the site and its recourses.

4 “HIMA” EBEL ES-SAQI: DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA/REGION

4.1 Ebel es-Saqi’s Location

Ecozone: semi-arid mediterranean

Located at Latitude 33°N, Longitude 35°E Ebel es-Saqi, this small village of South Lebanon, has a unique strategic location at a flat hilltop (760 m) in the middle of a plain topography giving it a panoramic view towards the Bekaa Valley and the Western Mount Lebanon Chain (North), the Houla Lake and Plain in Palestine (South), the Mount Hermon tops and the Hasbani River (East) and the Marjeyoun Plain (West).

4.2 The Origin of the Village’s Name

Ebel es-Saqi is characterized by the richness and fertility of its soils and the abundance of fresh water (Nabaa’ Ebel, Ayn El Mohra, and Hasbani River) which could explain the origin of its name. The establishment has an old history dating back to Biblical times where it was referred to as Ebel El-miyah (water), and Ebel El-zayt (oil) by the historian Ibn Asaker stating that the Prophet Mohamed on his way back from “Hagat Alwadaa” ordered Ousama Bin Zayd to pass through it with his horses.

4.3 Archaeological and Historical Value

The village has several historic and archaeological sites like the El-Qbaibé, with old Jewish burial sites; and the Tell, where “Aldaii Ammar”, the first martyr of the Druze pretension, was killed. The village has at all times been known for the solidarity among its people – Christians and Druze. This cultural richness was enhanced by the presence of UNIFIL Norwegian troops in the village for twenty years (1978-1998) which led to deep relations with Norway through a yearly celebration of its Constitution Day, a museum and a Ghandi park; and establishment of a Norwegian Lebanese friendship association.

4.4 Heritage

In the 1960s, the village was considered as a model Lebanese rural village. The *Bait Al Fallah* (the Farmer’s House), a museum of traditional agricultural implements and clothing, an artisan centre, and a public library (15,000 books) were the pride of the village before they were destroyed during the war. Furthermore, the known Lebanese “folklore” writer Salam El-Rassi was born in Ebel es-Saqi, and documented the village’s heritage.

Ancient olive plantations cover wide areas surrounding the village, constituting unique scenery and representing the tight relation of the locals with their land. These trees are the main source of income for most inhabitants; known for their tasty fruits and high quality oil. Grapes used to cover all the plain, north and west to the village; many other fruit trees and vegetables are still widespread in the orchards and private fields.

4.5 Architecture

The village is known by its traditional rural Lebanese architecture varying between simple small dwellings to large sophisticated mansions, most of which were damaged during the war but still carry the beauty and spirit of coherence with nature. The designs and materials used in the different traditional constructions (support walls, fences and dwellings) show a high understanding of nature and correct use of its resources in a rational way.

4.6 Forests

While the village and its surroundings offer a landscape with degraded natural vegetation, a pine forest lies on the hill overlooking the area. The original vegetation was mainly composed of *Quercus calliprinos* accompanied by a series of sclerophyllous broadleaf laurifoliated species, typical of the bioclimatic conditions. *Pinus pinea*, *P. halepensis* and *C. sempervirens* were planted by the Ministry of Agriculture in the 1960-70's. The forest was traditionally used by the villagers for different purposes, without any specific management plan. Sporadic works were undertaken to maintain the productivity of the *P. pinea* stands (for the production of pine nuts) and to allow for unorganized recreation and outdoor activities.

Having miraculously survived the ravages of civil war, the trees are now more than 30 years old, making the forest impressive in size and density. The pine forest has become a distinct landscape and a landmark that is easily discernable from afar. With an area of 38 ha, the forest stretches in a northeast-southwest direction, occupying the north-western aspect of a hill adjoining the village.

The forest is surrounded by a degraded other wooded lands formation, mainly composed of stunted and overgrazed oak stands (*Quercus calliprinos*).

5 THE CONCERNED STAKEHOLDERS AND THE ROLES THEY PLAY IN EBEL-ES-SAQI AND IN KFAR ZABAD

The following four sets of stakeholders are identified:

- “*Hima*” manager and team
- “*Hima*” committee
- Local municipality
- External organizations (NGOs, tour operators, public institutions...).

“*Hima*” manager and team: The manager is considered as the driving entity of the whole process. During the selection process it should be made sure that he/she has a love of coordination and collaboration, has strong communication skills, as well as good planning, monitoring and management skills allowing him/her to adapt to changes. The role of the manager and team consists of: developing the action plan for each year; attracting and coordinating the work of volunteers both from within and outside Ebel es Saqi; implementing the action plan and; reporting back to the committee.

“*Hima*” committee: The committee is designated by the municipality, and should obtain a legal status. The committee is to be constituted of a mix of local and national representatives all sharing the vision and committing the time to successfully achieve it. The role of the committee consists of: mobilizing resources; representing the “*Hima*” legally (they can choose to delegate this role to the manager); supporting the manager and management team for the implementation of certain activities; approving the annual action plan produced by the manager and monitoring its progress.

Local municipality: The municipality being a democratically elected body, it is therefore considered to reflect the aspirations of the community. The role of the municipality consists of the following: undertake the role of the manager for a limited time until the project advances on the ground allowing the hiring of a manager; nominate the members of the community committee; set up an “announcement board” at the entrance of the municipality to communicate and announce activities; undertake all the activities related to urban improvement to serve the vision.

The municipality of Ebel-es-Saqi was first elected in 1961. It worked on making of Ebel-es-Saqi a model rural village presenting its cultural and heritage values to its visitors. The municipality also facilitated the adoption of Ebel-es-Saqi as a headquarters for UNIFIL peacekeeping forces. Today, the municipality is focusing on developing the village in a sustainable manner by conserving wildlife while awarding it an economical value through ecotourism. Furthermore, in an unprecedented move, the municipality of Ebel-es-Saqi took a unanimous decision to ban hunting.

External organizations: In coordination with the “*Hima*” Committee, external organizations can support in achieving the vision and objectives through the provision of expertise and training, financial support for the implementation of projects and activities, as well as marketing the area for the purpose of increasing economic returns.

- **BirdLife International**

A global partnership of Non-Governmental conservation organizations in more than hundred countries, working together on shared priorities, policies and programs of conservation action. BirdLife strives to conserve birds, their habitats, and biodiversity, working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources.

- **The Society for Protection of Nature in Lebanon**

Established in 1984, is a national NGO and the BirdLife partner in Lebanon. SPNL strives to protect nature and biodiversity in Lebanon for present and future generations and to support the sustainable use of natural resources.

A local SPNL chapter has been established from members encompassing people from the local community and the municipal councils of Ebel-es-Saqi and Kfar Zabad. SPNL provided the young members of the SSG with capacity building courses mainly related to guiding techniques in nature as well as bird identification (supported by LPO-BirdLife partner in France). The continuous management of the site is based upon a memorandum of understanding between the municipalities and SPNL that the site will remain protected from any type of violation, especially hunting. Additional memorandum of understanding was elaborated and signed between SPNL and the local chapters to ensure the sustainable management process for the coming 15 years.

- **Mercy Corps**

Mercy Corps alleviates suffering, poverty and oppression by helping people build secure, productive and just communities. Since 1979, Mercy Corps has provided more than \$830 million in assistance to people in 80 nations. Mercy Corps allocates more than 91 percent of its resources to programs that assist people in need.

In Lebanon, Mercy Corps' goal is a productive civil society applying sound economic and environmental practices. Although Mercy Corps focuses on economic development, the organization also implements projects that emphasize change in human utilization of resources, adopting new practices and knowledge, and promoting environmental protection. In both tourism and agricultural activities, environmental considerations are the foundation for long term economic impact.

- **USAID**

USAID provides economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 100 countries to provide a better future for all. USAID's Mission in Lebanon strives to help nurture the right environment for the Lebanese people to promote sound economic opportunities, political governance, environmental health, peace and stability in order to improve Lebanon's overall regional and global well being, primarily by targeting key growth-oriented industry sectors and geographical areas.

6 THE FOREST MANAGEMENT APPROACHES, METHODOLOGIES AND ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED IN EBEL-ES-SAQI

In 2003, an independent consultant was commissioned by ESCWA to undertake an evaluation of the forest of Ebel-es-Saqi with a view to proposing a development plan. The consultant, a landscape architect in the Department of Plant Science, Faculty of Agricultural & Food Sciences, at the American University of Beirut undertook the preparation of a master plan for the Ebel-es-Saqi area, along with a team of experts in different related fields, from AUB, leading to the proposal of an Ecological Park. The Society for Protection of Nature in Lebanon was involved in the implementation phase, thus proposing the concept of the “*Hima*” to the local community and the preparation and implementation of a management plan with the concerned stakeholders.

6.1 The Methodology: A Holistic, Landscape Approach

With the growing environmental impact of human activities, the need to conserve biodiversity, fragile habitats and threatened landscapes is becoming urgent. A paradigm shift is currently occurring on the global level in terms of nature conservation and protection. The trend is increasingly towards:

- Embracing the management of the wider countryside, covering rural and cultural landscapes. This implies that conservation and management strategies for the forest at Ebel-es-Saqi will need to be undertaken within the larger regional context, i.e. of the Hasbani River and adjoining rural landscapes.
- Realizing that national and regional planning should be complemented by awareness and participation of the local communities. This could be realized in Ebel-es-Saqi by utilizing the landscape potential of the forest to improve the economic condition and by increasing public awareness through emphasizing on the educational and informational aspects of the natural processes, within and around the forest.
- Integrating recreation and tourism into conservation/management strategies. A large part of the Muhafadha of Nabatiya is under economic, social and environmental stress in the aftermath of occupation and the civil war. For conservation strategy and legislation of the forest at Ebel-es-Saqi to succeed it should necessarily be combined with development that will improve the economic condition of the local community, by combining conservation with recreation and nature related tourist activities.
- In-situ conservation. This is an approach that is gaining in popularity because it is an embodiment of local measures that sensitize local communities towards better stewardship and management of natural resources. In-situ conservation allows for tailoring conservation priorities and long term management to the specific physical, natural and socioeconomic conditions of a selected landscape (ravines, coastal enclaves, hilly woodlands such as that of Ebel-es-Saqi).

The methodological framework proposed for Ebel-es-Saqi integrated conservation with economic opportunities through a flexible framework combining wildlife and landscape conservation by not necessarily putting a stop to changes. The objective was to ensure the continuity of management of long-term activities (nature conservation) within the proposed activities (recreational and educational). Incorporating conservation into a range of other activities and land uses requires a basic understanding of the processes that have shaped, and will continue to shape, our landscape.

The three dimensions of sustainability were considered in the concept of the Ebel-es-Saqi Ecological Park: environmental, economic and cultural.

- Environmental sustainability, through the efficient and prudent utilization of natural resources, not only those that are designated for conservation and protection, i.e. landscape and wildlife, but also for the proposed recreational and commercial activities proposed in association with the forest.
- Economic sustainability, implying that the management of the park is at least self-sufficient and at best profitable economically. This is ensured by planning *with* the local community economic activities in the park that are essentially derived and based on local village productions and activities. Economic sustainability is equally ensured by planning for activities and attractions outside the forest and the park, in the village and its surroundings.
- Cultural sustainability, by building on the past and current heritage of the village of Ebel-es-Saqi, which has a long history of Lebanese rural tradition. The proposed holistic approach advocates using the Ebel-es-Saqi Ecological Park as a springboard to focus on cultural features of similar historical and cultural assets.

The proposed project aimed at developing a sustainable plan for the utilization of the pine forest of Ebel-es-Saqi to accommodate nature conservation concerns while promoting economic opportunities for the local community.

6.2 Overall Project Objectives

The overall objectives included the development of an innovative holistic and dynamic model for nature conservation:

- Development based on the environmental, economic and socio-cultural constraints and potentials of the region.
- Sustainable development of natural and cultural resources.
- Empowerment of local communities to take action, for the protection, management and promotion of these resources while taking benefit from them.
- Integration of nature conservation, nature education and recreational activities.

6.3 Specific Project Objectives

1. Protection and management of the existing pine woodland.
2. Development of the landscape as a cultural and aesthetic heritage not only for Ebel-es-Saqi, but for the South Lebanon region.
3. Sustainable utilization of the pine woodland in order to promote environmental awareness of natural and cultural resources by addressing issues such as forest protection and management, ecosystems, wildlife habitats and landscapes.
4. Planning for a range of recreational activities associated with the forest as a means of attracting tourism at the local, regional and national levels.
5. Using the pine woodland project as a means of increasing the number of interest points to further promote and attract investment/tourism for Ebel-es-Saqi and the Kaza of Marjaoun.

6.4 The Landscape

The landscape of Ebel-es-Saqi Forest is exceptional because of its location, vis-à-vis the surrounding region, the distinctiveness of the site topography, its biodiversity, and because of the aesthetic quality of the forested landscape itself. It follows that the landscape of the Ebel-es-Saqi Forest is of value:

- As a wildlife habitat, a natural shelter for plants, terrestrial animals and birds.
- As a mature forest of considerable size, which is rare in South Lebanon?
- For the outstanding panoramic, scenic view the site offers over the surrounding region, extending from Hasbaya, along the Hasbani Valley to the majestic mountains beyond.
- The recreational potential the site possess.

Based on the physical, geographical, natural and cultural characteristics of the landscape, the study recommended the development of the Ebel-es-Saqi forest and its surroundings in an integrative, holistic framework that integrates conservation and recreation. The forest has potential to be developed as a natural park landscape serving not only the community of Ebel-es-Saqi, but the surrounding towns and villages.

6.5 Importance of the Area for Migration of Birds

After the study undertaken by the AUB team, the SPNL went on to assess the site as an “important bird areas” (IBA). IBAs are sites of international importance for bird conservation at the global, regional or national level, based upon standard, internationally

recognized criteria. IBAs are not only important for birds, but typically support a wide range of other important animal and plant species. Furthermore, many IBAs are also significant for human welfare and economic well being, through protecting water catchments, providing flood control or as a source of natural resources.

Thorough ecological research was implemented on Ebel-es-Saqi forest using the IBA Database Sheet which resulted in the compilation of Bird Checklists for the site (refer to the “*Hima*” Ebel-es-Saqi IBA Assessment Report for the IBA Database Sheet & the detailed Baseline Bird Checklists). This compiled scientific information upon its comparison to the internationally accepted IBA criteria showed the importance of the site as a potential IBA and bottleneck for migration species.

The aims of the proposed management for the protection of the site as an IBA dictated its division into six land use zones based on the level of cultivation, the activities related to them, and the bird species inhabiting them. These are:

1. The Pine Forest: a coniferous wooded area, covering 38.2 ha approximately, mainly used for uncontrolled recreational purposes, with limited wood collection or economic benefits. The forest species found on the site are *Pinus pinea*, *Pinus halepensis* and *Cupressus sempervirens*. The dominant species being *Pinus pinea*, one of the major uses of the site by the villagers was the collection of pine nuts.
2. The Scrubland: a rocky scrub land, spreading over an approximate area of 97.0 ha, mainly used for intensive grazing, as clearly indicated by the lack of any signs of tree regeneration, and a profusion of goat tracks. The dominant woody species found on this OWL are the *Quercus calliprinos* and the *Pistacia palaestina*.
3. The Hasbani River Ecozone: a narrow strip of land adjacent to the river, over grown with trees like *Alnus orientalis*, *Platanus orientalis*, and undergrowth mainly composed of *Nerium oleander*, barely utilized, except for limited recreational activities, or as a water source for the grazing animals.
4. The Hasbani River; extending around 3.7 km through the area, mainly used for irrigation.
5. The Crop fields: an area of approximately 18.8 ha, used predominately to grow grain.
6. The Olive Groves: the major zone, covering around 109.3 ha, historically used exclusively to grow olive trees.

Millions of birds migrate between Europe and Africa flying over Lebanon twice a year, where large numbers are forced to congregate over a limited duration of time in geographically constricted areas, making these “bottleneck” areas one of the most dynamic systems in bird migration.

The large concentration of migrating soaring birds over Ebel-es-Saqi makes it a potential bottleneck area of national, regional and international importance. This could well be a basis for its designation as a destination point for eco-tourists and birdwatchers.

So far, a total of 369 bird species have been identified in Lebanon. 134 of the species are recorded as breeding while 56 species are exclusively residents. The list of migrants and/or over wintering birds includes 246 species.

Examples of bird species associated with the zones designated for “*Hima*” Ebel es-Saqi:

Zone I: Pine forest

- 1) Levant Sparrow Hawk: *Accipiter brevipes*
- 2) Barn Owl: *Tyto alba*
- 3) Tawny Owl: *Strix aluco*
- 4) Little Owl: *Athene noctua*
- 5) Woodcock: *Scolopax rusticola*
- 6) Turtle Dove: *Streptopelia lugens*
- 7) Woodlark: *Lullula arborea*
- 8) Redstart: *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*
- 9) Blackbird: *Turdus merula*
- 10) Great Tit: *Parus major*
- 11) Masked Shrike: *Lanius nubicus*
- 12) Chaffinch: *Fringilla coelebs*
- 13) Greenfinch: *Carduelis chloris*
- 14) Goldfinch: *Carduelis carduelis*

Zone II: Scrub and rocky land

- 1) Short-toed eagle: *Circaetus gallicus*
- 2) Lesser kestrel: *Falco naumanni*
- 3) Swift: *Apus apus*
- 4) Skylark: *Alauda arvensis*
- 5) Swallow: *Hirundo* spp.
- 6) Hoopoe: *Upupa epops*
- 7) Wheatear spp.: *Oenanthe* spp.
- 8) Woodchat shrike: *Lanius senator*
- 9) Rock sparrow: *Petronia petronia*
- 10) Rock bunting: *Emberiza cia*
- 11) Cinereous bunting: *Emberiza cineracea*

Zone III: Hasbani River ecotone valley

- 1) Night heron: *Nycticorax nycticorax*
- 2) Grey heron: *Ardea cinerea*
- 3) Sparrowhawk: *Accipiter nisus*

- 4) Corncrake: *Crex crex*
- 5) Water Pipit: *Anthus spinoletta*
- 6) Wren: *Troglodytes troglodytes*
- 7) Blue throat: *Luscinia svecica*
- 8) Blackbird: *Turdus merula*
- 9) Sedge warbler: *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*
- 10) Sardinian warbler: *Sylvia melanocephala*
- 11) Syrian serin: *Serinus syriacus*

Zone IV: Hasbani River

- 1) Teal: *Anas crecca*
- 2) Water rail: *Rallus aquaticus*
- 3) Little crane: *Porzana parva*
- 4) Moorhen: *Gallinula chloropus*
- 5) Coot: *Fulica atra*
- 6) Kingfisher: *Alcedo atthis*

Zone V: Crop fields

- 1) White stork: *Ciconia ciconia*
- 2) Crane: *Grus grus*
- 3) Black kite: *Milvus migrans*
- 4) Montagu's harrier: *Circus pygargus*
- 5) Crested lark: *Galerida cristata*
- 6) Short-toed lark: *Calendrella brachydactyla*
- 7) Bee-eater: *Merops* spp.
- 8) Tawny pipit: *Anthus campestris*
- 9) Linnet: *Carduelis cannabina*
- 10) Black-headed bunting: *Emberiza melanocephala*

Zone VI: Olive groves

- 1) Song thrush: *Turdus philomelos*
- 2) Bulbul: *Pycnonotus jocosus*
- 3) Graceful warbler: *Prinia gracilis*
- 4) Olivaceous warbler: *Hippolais pallida*
- 5) Upcher's warbler: *Hippolais languida*
- 6) Olive tree warbler: *Hippolais olivetorum*
- 7) Orphan warbler: *Sylvia hortensis*

6.6 The Management Plan

Building on the assessment and master plan proposed by the team of experts from AUB, a management plan was prepared in a very participatory approach involving the local stakeholders along with the SPNL and other NGOs, experts and scientific society.

The management plan for “*Hima*” Ebel-es-Saqi was developed based on the Important Bird Area Assessment report produced by the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon. Subsequently, stakeholder participation was sought through peer to peer meetings, informal communications, and was concluded by a participatory workshop conducted by Mercy Corps and SPNL in Ebel-es-Saqi on June 18 and 19, 2005. The purpose of this workshop was to lay the ground for a common language, vision and objectives, not only within the local community, but also taking into account the views and considerations of national and international stakeholders from the public, private and civil society sectors.

The main goal is to promote ecotourism and sustainable environmentally friendly income-generating activities through IBA’s identification in the area, conservation and sustainable use of its natural resources, all of which are based on the active participation of the local community and for their own benefits.

To achieve this goal, taking into consideration the ecological findings and the characteristics of the site and through the input of ecotourism experts, a management plan detailing the infrastructure and recreational activities suitable for implementation on the site and the sustainable use of its natural resources was produced.

The aims of this plan are:

- Protection of birds in general and migrating birds in particular.
- Protection of the ecosystem biodiversity.
- Long term autonomous management of the project by the community.
- The use of the site by local and regional communities for: Conservation, education, scientific research, recreation purposes and expanding economic opportunities.

The suggested plan is summarized below, dividing the distribution of construction facilities in two main areas:

Non-Protected Area (Public Area) including:

- The “*Hima*” Entrance
- The Parking Area
- The “Saha” / distribution central space
- The Recreation Area
- The Visitor Centre.

Protected Area comprising:

- Pedestrian Trails
- Education Area
- Scientific Studies Area
- Beit el Fellah.

Plus the use of the existing structures:

- Water Tank
- Storage Room.

Furthermore, due to budget constraints, the implementation of the Master Plan was prioritized into 3 stages:

Phase I: including the Visitor Centre, pedestrian trails, signatures, points of attraction, parking, pond, recreational and picnic area, and the sales sheds.

Phase II: including the observation tower, Beit El Fallah, children playground, parking area extension if required, pond extension and the educational program.

Phase III: includes the advanced fire prevention system, children camping site, cycling trails, and possible special ecotourism activities such as canoeing, rafting and caving.

Figure 7²: The Ebel-es-Saqi Forest showing the mixed conifers



Figure 8: A general view of conifers forest in the background and the riparian formation in the foreground



² Pictures 7-12: courtesy of Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL).

Figure 9: Scrubland with dominant rock formations and herbaceous species surrounding the mixed conifers forest in Ebel-es-Saqi



**Figure 10:
The Olive Grove in Ebel-es-Saqi**



6.7 Objectives and Activities

The objectives and their associated activities, as set by the involved stakeholders in order to attain the vision are:

Conservation of and improvement of the status of biodiversity and ecosystems:

- Documenting the preliminary assessment studies undertaken by SPNL and building on them to monitor both positive and negative changes.
- Ensuring continuous monitoring by hiring staff to undertake it or through linkages with scientific organization and universities.
- Setting clear conditions for visiting the “*Hima*”.
- Undertaking continuous awareness activities in schools.
- Setting laws to ban hunting and ensuring they are properly enforced.
- Hiring wardens for the “*Hima*”.
- Working with the farmers to reduce the use of agro-chemicals.
- Providing hunters with alternative activities.
- Setting laws to ban wood felling and construction of huge infrastructure, water and air pollution and ensuring they are properly enforced.

Creation of job opportunities and marketing the area to foster economic development

- Implementing/participating in tourism festivals and exhibitions.
- Establishing strong linkages with tourism companies to attract visitors and schools.
- Developing project proposals to be submitted to donor agencies.
- Creating a cooperative for handcrafts and rural products.
- Designing and producing “*Hima*” Souvenirs.

Sound and reasonable management of the “*Hima*”:

- Hiring a manager.
- Setting an entrance fee for the “*Hima*”.
- Monitoring and planning for activities.
- Monitoring, evaluating and updating the management and action plan.
- Publicizing and documenting all activities and achievements.
- Ensuring regular training opportunities to build the capacities of the management team.

Setting up an operational and effective “*Hima*” committee and management team:

- Undertaking regular meetings for the current committee.
- Identifying the needs in terms of human resources and capacities.
- Evaluating the work of the committee and including new members if needed.
- Setting clear terms of reference and responsibilities for each active member of the committee and management team.

Chart 1: The participatory planning process adopted in Ebel-es-Saqi

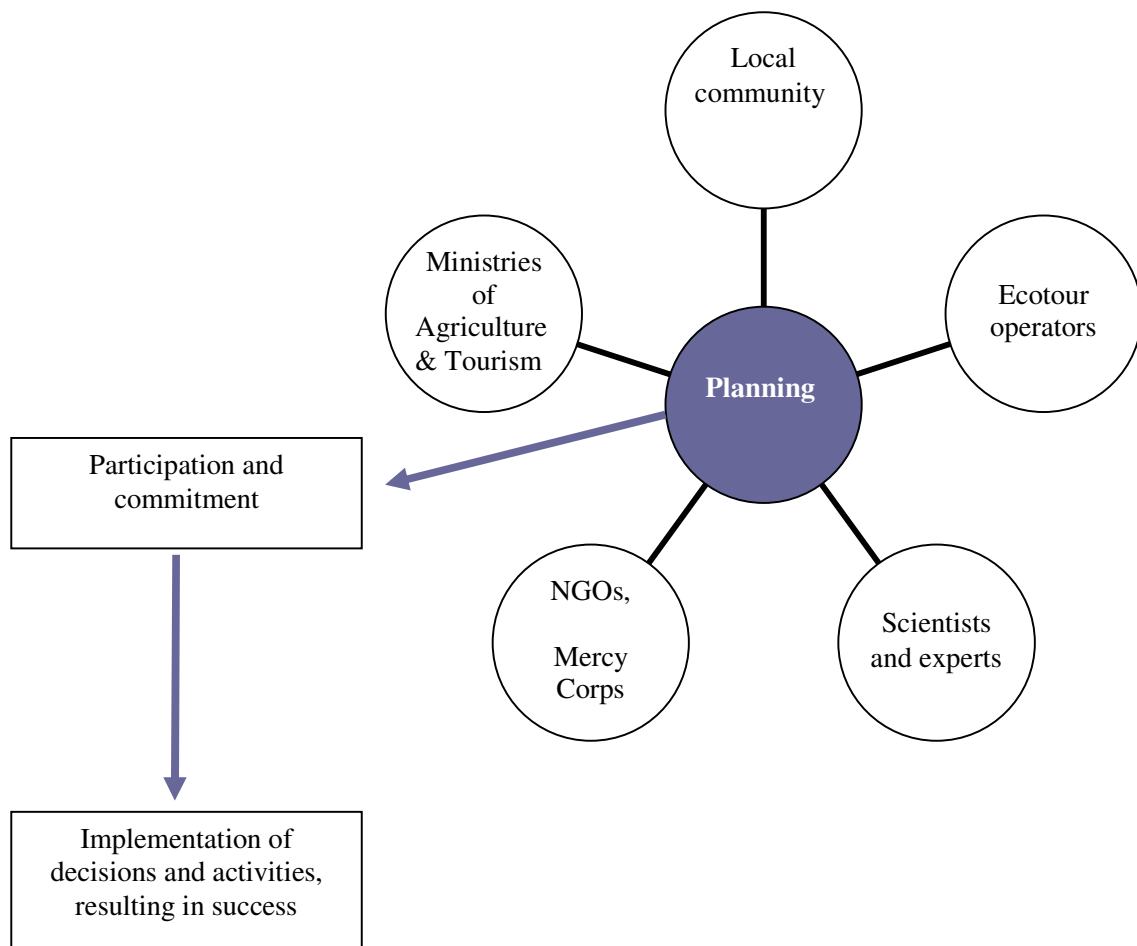
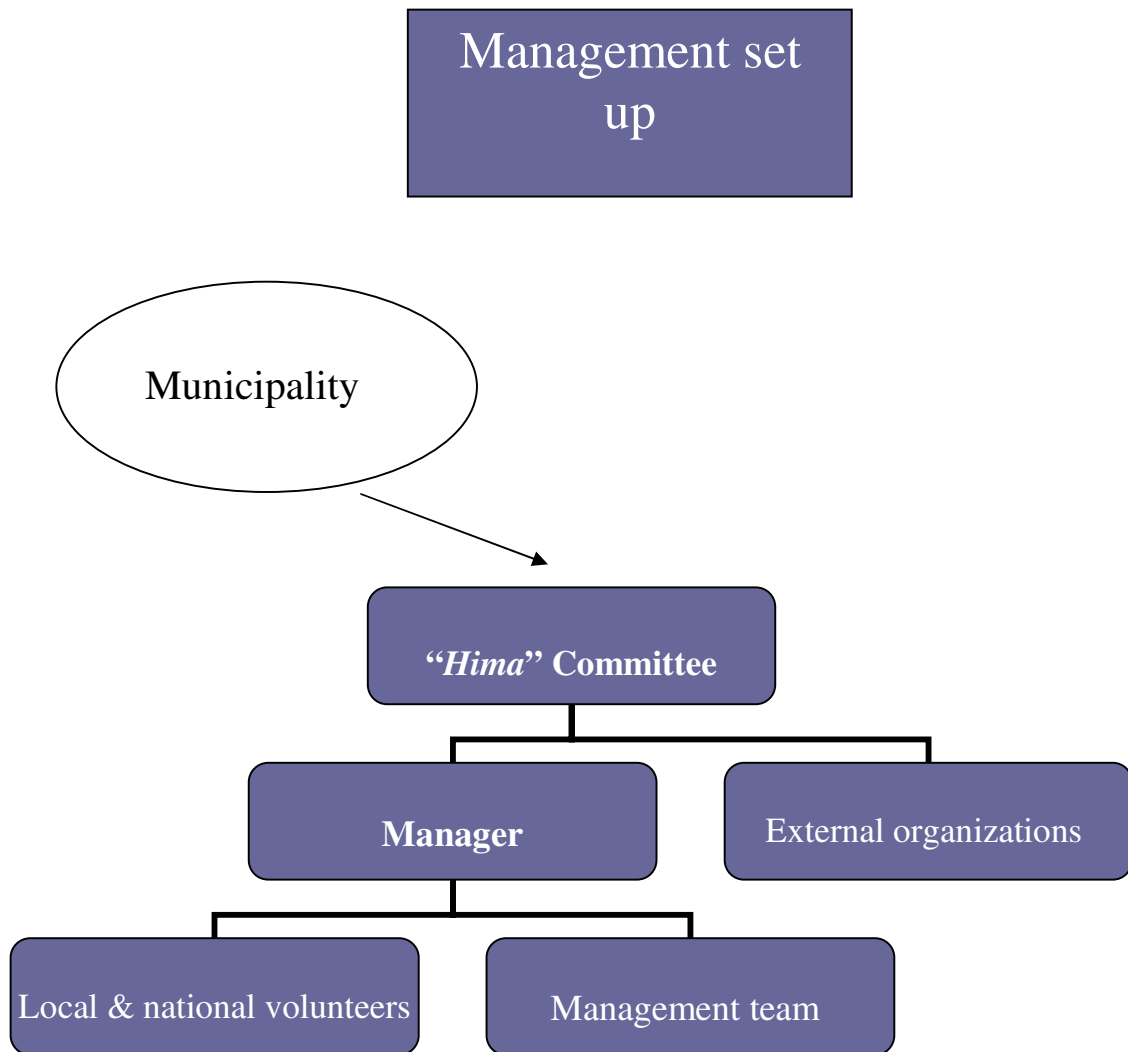


Chart 2: The Management set-up in Ebel-es-Saqi



6.8 Ecotourism Activities and Infrastructures at “Hima” Ebel-es-Saqi

- The Visitor Center: A welcoming information area; the departure point for all trails; souvenir kiosk; toilet facilities; and exhibition and projection hall (135 m²) that can accommodate 35 persons; in addition to an open circular shaded area.
- The Recreation Area: Sale shacks for local natural products, food and refreshments; a picnic area with water sources, toilets and a children playground.
- The Scientific Observation Area: Bird hides and a research camping area.
- The Eagle Trail: A rather difficult trail passing through a rocky slope around the pond and into the pinewood, with a view over the Mount Hermon, the Hasbani River and Valley. The trail offers two resting points, one on a natural platform and the other with benches and a water source.
- The Pinewood Trail: Easier than the Eagle trail and shadier with a refreshing green landscape. It forms a loop around the pinewood and ends at the visitor center, meeting the Eagle Trail at the resting point with benches and water resource.
- The Pond Trail: Located between the two trails mentioned above but following an easier course. It is built to allow the access for handicapped visitors. It merges the panoramic view of the first with the freshness of the second where the pond provides a special ecosystem to view.
- The Shepherd Path: A traditional path with rural landscape, offering two points of attraction:
 - Beit El Fellah (the farmer's house): based on a vernacular architecture exactly as it was before its destruction during the war. It demonstrates the close relationship between people and their environment, in the old daily lifestyle of the Fellah (farmer).
 - Goat herd: Offering the shepherds the opportunity to sell their products as a compensation for decreasing the herd and limiting the grazing field.

6.9 Other Tourism Attraction Sites in the Vicinity

- The Beaufort Castle – Chkeef, a fortress built on a mountain top above the Litani River, by the Norwegian crusaders and later used by the consecutive rulers of the area. It was severely damaged during the Israeli occupation.
- The World War II remains – Khiam, including an underground bunker that was built as a field hospital in the plain of Khiam, defence ditches and blockages at the line extending from Beaufort Castle to Ebel Es-Saqi. Nearby also lies the Derdara (vernacular name of the *Fraxinus syriaca*) springs forming a small lake in the plain of Khiam and offering a cool shade where picnics are enjoyed.
- The Prison of Khiam, built on the town's highest hill by the French in 1933 as a well-fortified barrack and taken over by the Lebanese army in 1943. The Israeli occupation used the barrack as a prison for Lebanese captives. It was

transformed by the Lebanese Government into a war and prison museum after the liberation of South Lebanon.

- Souk El Khan – Hasbaya, a rural caravanserai (Khan) built by the Emir Abou Bakr Al-Chahabi in the late 14th century. A traditional weekly market is held on Tuesdays (local products) in a pine and eucalyptus wood next to the Souk.
- Rachaya Al-Foukhar, famous for its traditional pottery production, ruins of an old palace dating to Phoenician times; Roman sarcophagi; several caves and grape presses dating to pre-Christian era; remains of an old city; and a Byzantine church.
- Chebaa village, far from all disturbances lying near the top of Mount Hermon. This big village offers a wonderful panoramic view over the whole area and a perfect starting point for hikers; in addition to a fort (Kalaat Antar) and other ruins. With its water springs supplying the whole region with drinking water, it offers a special climate where snow remains in deep ridges all through the summer.

Figure 11: A view of the river in Ebel-es-Saqi with the riparian species and the mixed conifers forest in the background



Figure 12: A path in the forest of Ebel-es-Saqi bordered by *Pinus brutia* trees



6.10 Future Vision for “Hima” Ebel es Saqi

- Ebel-es-Saqi is seen as an exemplary town conserving its cultural, natural and social heritage and diversity thus making it a key destination for tourism at the national and international levels.
- Ebel-es-Saqi is seen as a pioneer town in the South and in the region, having revived the “*Hima*” practice hence contributing to economic development, limiting youth migration and creating job opportunities.
- Cooperation, understanding, awareness, tolerance and participation constitute the key features that will allow Ebel-es-Saqi to fulfil its vision.

7 KFAR ZABAD WETLAND: DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA/REGION

Although the “*Hima*” is in the village of Kfar Zabad, our study describes the Anjar village in its vicinity as both villages benefit of each other in terms of resources and activities.

7.1 The Location

Both Kfar Zabad and Anjar fall in the Zahleh Caza – Bekaa Mohafazah at an altitude ranging between 850-1000 m above sea level.

Kfar Zabad wetland is a small marshland on the level plain of the Bekaa Valley (part of the Syrian-African Great Rift Valley) which is on the main migration route for African-Eurasian water birds through the Near East. Kfar Zabad is located on the foothills of the Anti-Lebanon Chain, which is characterized by its pre-steppic xerophytic vegetation.

The water supply of the marshland is derived mainly from the permanent Shamsein River and the “Ma’asaya” spring emanating from the base of the Anti-Lebanon Mountains. In addition, the marshland forms part of a tributary of Lebanon's major river, the Litani, which helps to preserve the marshlands from drought.

Kfar Zabad marshlands lie on one of the important flyways in Lebanon for migratory birds where over 10% of these birds depend on the wetland for their survival.

7.2 The Origin of the Villages’ Names

The name of Kfar Zabad has a Syriac origin meaning the “village of the butter (or yogurt)” or the “land of butter (or yogurt)”, which shows the ancestral traditions of grazing in the region. Anjar would take its origins from two words: Ayn and jarr. Ayn meaning the water spring and jarr refers to the fact of taking water from the spring through canals.

7.3 Archaeological and Historical Value

Kfar Zabad village is classified by the Ministry of Tourism due to its richness in ancient archaeological ruins scattered through its plains and up on its hillsides-Al Fa’aour and Ein El Bayda. Anjar is famous for its historic citadel dating from the Omeiad period, its restaurants offering fresh trout and its mild and pleasant climate.

7.4 Heritage and Tourism

Some 16 restaurants scattered along the river bed are managed by the local population who raise the rainbow trout in fish ponds and in the river. The Ministry of Agriculture produces the fingerlings in the aquaculture centre in Anjar and distributes them to the fish farmers in all the Beqaa Valley.

The fish production has greatly contributed to the development of the region and is one of the main reasons for the successful restaurant business in the area. It has also contributed to the survival of the globally threatened otter who finds shelter and feed in a hostile surrounding environment.

7.5 The Forest

While the hills surrounding the village are covered by a sparse other wooded lands dominated by oak bushes (*Quercus calliprinos*), very few woody species are found around the marshland in the boundaries of the village. However, Anjar the neighboring village is characterized by its flowing river and its riparian woody vegetation dominated by *Fraxinus syriaca* and *Populus* spp.

Poplar plantations once used for the production of wooden boxes for fruits and vegetables are now converted to recreational sites, which are unfortunately not managed in an appropriate manner.

The severely over-grazed surrounding OWL is traditionally used for goat and sheep grazing. Some efforts are currently being developed by the Ministry of Agriculture to reduce the grazing intensity. The results are still far from being tangible as the initiative is just starting.

8 THE FOREST MANAGEMENT APPROACHES, METHODOLOGIES AND ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED IN KFAR ZABAD

8.1 The Management Plan

As mentioned earlier, the “*Hima*” in Ebel-es-Saqi having started before Kfar Zabad, the stakeholders had the opportunity to develop, document and implement a sound master plan for the “*Hima*” and its surroundings. The plan was prepared in a very participatory approach involving the local stakeholders along with the NGO, experts and scientific society. The same approach was applied in Kfar Zabad but was not documented.

8.2 Importance of the Area for Migration of Birds

Kfar Zabad wetland was proposed for the status of IBA-A1 category, due to the occurrence of several globally and regionally threatened bird species, such as pallid harrier (*Circus macrourus*), imperial eagle (*Aquila heliaca*), lesser kestrel (*Falco naumanni*), and Syrian serin (*Serinus syriacus*) (a restricted-range species), as well as several biome-restricted species. The wetland is also known to support river otter, jungle cat and wild cat.

8.3 Ecotourism Activities at Kfar Zabad

- **Climbing:** The hill, at 1000 m altitude, located in a central position of Kfar Zabad, is highly suitable for climbing and rappelling. Several routes are available for climbing the cliff of this hill; which would serve for educational purposes or sport activities, offered to various groups: young and adults, students and corporate groups.
- **Canoe and Calm Rafting:** The Shamsin River is suitable for canoeing/rafting, coupled with animal and bird watching. The idea is to visit the place in a quiet manner without disturbing the fauna and the flora. The canoe/raft activity is excellent for building team work, observing nature from water, learning to respect nature, fauna and flora, and enjoying the sounds of nature. The length of the river navigation is about 3 km.
- **Biking:** Kfar Zabad offers around 25 km of suitable trails for biking, with different levels of difficulties; ranging from easy to medium level. Bikers can follow agricultural trails and directional signs; with a map for guidance. Biking in the village promotes human cultural exchange with local farmers and workers, exchange of experiences and share of unforgettable moments.
- **Hiking:** The most common sport activity is hiking, where hikers on the agricultural trails can enjoy the natural scenery. Climbing to the hilltop offers an unforgettable view, with the exploration of Roman ruins which can form the climax of the visit.
- **Bird Watching:** Kfar Zabad is declared as an IBA. Preliminary observations from the SPNL/A Rocha Lebanon monitoring program (started in spring 2005) have so far identified more than 125 bird species; in addition to several wild mammals especially the endangered River Otter, wild cat and badger.

- Visiting the cultivated Area: A visit to the cultivated fields surrounding the wetland will allow visitors to be exposed to Kfar Zabad agricultural products, (fruits and vegetables) and to sharing farmers in agricultural activities (picking or planting potatoes, lettuces, tomatoes, etc.).
- Bed and Breakfast: Kfar Zabad is well known for its good hospitality services. In order to support local livelihood and to increase visitor's enjoyment of the wetland, SPNL is encouraging the local people of Kfar Zabad to develop nature guest houses. This activity will in turn help in increasing the support of the local communities to the conservation efforts of the "*Hima*", thus creating synergies between the village and its natural resources.
- Several facilities are under construction on site and in the village (visitor centre, picnic and camping area, trails, ponds, bed and breakfast) to provide the needed services to visitors.

8.4 Other Tourism Attraction Sites in the Vicinity

Although Anjar is not included in the "*Hima*", the activities undertaken and the forest vegetation provide a substantial support for the development and protection efforts with the restaurants and other tourism facilities and the shelter offered to birds and mammals by the local forest formations (riparian and OWL).

8.5 Hope Campaign

During the July war on Lebanon, Kfar Zabad wetlands in the Bekaa valley was severely affected; the Kfar Zabad agrarian community received around 120 displaced families within their own houses. SPNL supported by financial contributions from Birdlife International head quarters and partners initiated the hope campaign in Kfar Zabad. The aim of the campaign was to support the local community in collaboration with the Municipality of Kfar Zabad and the SSG, in order to lessen the burdens of war on the Kfar Zabad villagers and the displaced, thus protecting the "*Hima*".

8.6 Current Projects in Kfar Zabad Wetlands

- SSG Small Grant Project: The SSG project is funded through the grant awarded by the Dutch Government to BirdLife International to support a four year program aiming to enhance civil society development and policy dialogue. The basic aim of this project is the enhancement of opportunities for local people at Important Bird Areas-IBAs. Such locals are extremely important as custodians of the world's biological wealth where they represent also some of the world's poorest people. The project involves the development of SSGs at the wetlands, thus linking the conservation of biodiversity to poverty reduction.

- **Al-Mashreq - SDC Project:** The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation-SDC has launched its project titled “Biodiversity Conservation through Ecotourism in the Mashreq Region” covering three countries: Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. The aim of this project is to contribute to the conservation of biodiversity resources for a sound development of ecotourism in the Mashreq region as a source of employment and income generation to local people. The project will cover in Lebanon four sites characterized by highly significant natural, historical, archaeological and landscape scenery features. Kfar Zabad was selected as one of the four sites where the project will be implemented.
- **NGO Twinning Project:** The twining project is funded by a grant received from the European Commission, to support collaborative efforts involving MedWet, RSCN (The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature) in Jordan and SPNL in Lebanon, for the action entitled “Twinning of MedWet with SPNL and RSCN for capacity building”. The aim of this project is to increase the knowledge base of Mediterranean NGOs, while enhancing the effectiveness of their collaborations with multiple stakeholders and authorities in order to conserve the environmental heritage of the region.

Figure 13: A wetland in Kfar Zabad³



³ Pictures 13-15: courtesy of SPNL.

Figure 14: Grazing in the “*Hima*” of Kfar Zabad



Figure 15: A general view of Kfar Zabad showing the wetland and the hills covered with degraded formations of *Quercus calliprinos*



9 CONSTRAINTS AND SHORTCOMINGS OF THE REVIVAL OF THE “*HIMA*”

One of the major constraints related to the revival of the “*Hima*” system is the revival of inequitable tribal practices that could result in ethnic and gender discrimination, conflicts and violent sanctions. Another constraint is the lack of knowledge in relation to mechanisms and interactions that have governed traditional management of land and natural resources, and to how these systems have evolved in modern contexts.

Traditional approaches such as the “*Hima*” will have to be adapted to new political, legal and socio-economic realities in order to meet the changing needs of local communities and the requirements of modern states. This requires a deepening of the knowledge base.

There is an obvious lack of understanding and a need to learn more about the “*Hima*” and other traditional conservation approaches. While the need for further research is important, it should not delay the implementation of the concept.

The revival of the system is not a matter of romantic impetuosity or nostalgia as it has proven to have scientific benefits that can profit protected areas in the region. “*Hima*” also incorporate ethical principles that are not necessarily inherent in the understanding of other forms of protected areas within the region.

A clear and common understanding of the “*Hima*” is needed; not a rigid definition, but rather guiding principles that are rooted in authenticity, yet flexible.

The understanding of it and other traditional natural resource management systems of the region (e.g. Aflaj and other water management systems, agricultural terraces, Awqaf, ‘Harim’ zones of water bodies, village tenure, grazing systems, etc...) is incomplete. Gaps need to be filled through research and assessment.

Although legal frameworks at the government level could compromise the decentralized nature of traditional approaches, a legal and policy framework is required for the “*Hima*” to survive. The involvement of environmental lawyers in the analysis of this situation will bring a consistent input to overcome this constraint.

While “*Hima*” have been one of the most important instruments for conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in the region, they have not adapted to social, economic and political changes and do not fit well in contemporary national legislation and policies.

The promotion and advocating of the “*Hima*” paradigm among conservation agencies and organizations in the region and internationally is essential. The aim is not to replicate this historical system, but to reinvigorate an authentic culture-based conservation paradigm from the region that bridges traditional and contemporary approaches and responds to the cultural needs, contexts, and value systems of the region.

10 RESULTS, LESSONS LEARNT AND REASONS FOR SUCCESS

The revival of the “*Hima*” system is very recent in Lebanon. Its use as a tool for multi-purpose forest and natural resources management may be very efficient. However, the application of the system is still too recent to be evaluated. It is still too early to draw lessons and to evaluate the reasons for success or failure.

Furthermore, both Ebel-es-Saqi and Kfar Zabad were affected by the war in the summer of 2006. Both of them are currently in sensitive areas where forest and natural resources management is not a priority.

The “*Hima*” system being implemented by the local community is certainly a major advantage in the current situation. Any other form of conservation imposed on the local community by the official authorities, would have resulted in a deliberate abandonment of the conservation practices in times of war and crisis. The local community groups and stakeholders did not abandon the “*Hima*” concept during the times of crisis. They are still advocating for the application of the concept hoping for positive results when the crisis is overcome.

11 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The case study has described a multi-purpose forest management system being applied in two forest and OWL areas in Lebanon. This management is based on the revival of the “*Hima*”, a traditional conservation and management system native to the region.

The revival of the “*Hima*” was initiated by a national NGO, the Society for Protection of Nature in Lebanon in collaboration with the local community groups, the municipalities and international NGOs and with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture.

The “*Hima*” allows for the multi-purpose forest management while involving the local communities and helping them draw direct benefits while conserving the resource. The “*Hima*” in Lebanon are currently being implemented in Important Bird Areas, where nature conservation for bird conservation is the major objective, but where other activities are undertaken such as: recreation, grazing, non-wood forest products collection (pine nuts and honey).

The economic benefits of the “*Hima*” are mainly through nature and eco-tourism, through the implementation of guest houses in the villages, and through the NWFP.

“*Hima*” are not contradictory with the traditional land use practices such as agriculture and grazing. They complement these practices by contributing to the conservation and sustainable use of the available resources.

The revival of the system and its development in the region could be faced with different levels of problems and constraints that could be overcome through:

Defining a Vision of the “*Hima*”

- Based on the overarching ethical principles:
 - Effective governance within the framework of public policy and legislation.
 - Aiming at the common good (of human societies, of living beings).
 - Avoid causing hardship to local communities (not depriving them of essential resources for their livelihoods).
 - Realizing benefits greater than detriments (maximize benefits and minimize detriments).
- Informed by the diversity of historical and traditional experience in the region.
- Adaptive to evolving needs of changing societies.
- Linking conservation of biodiversity with the sustainable use of renewable natural resources.
- Ensuring mutual benefit between humans and their natural environment.
- Ensuring local community role in management and activities.
- Ensuring equitable sharing of benefits at the local level.
- Taking into consideration the social, cultural and environmental specificities of different places and their local communities.

- Including flexibility as a core element in the implementation, taking into consideration different spatial and temporal circumstances.
- Being open to lessons from around the world, and derived from best practices of the cultural heritage of the region thus becoming a positive contribution to global conservation.

Improving Understanding of the “*Hima*” and other Traditional Conservation Practices

- Literature review.
- Assessments and evaluations of “*Hima*” and other traditional resource management systems, to document levels of biodiversity, standing crop biomass, differences in species composition, value as *in situ* seed banks, etc...
- Research in economic functioning of “*Hima*” and other traditional resource management systems with regard to allocation of benefits, accountability in the use of resources, livelihoods and tangible benefits.
- Relationships between the various traditional resource management systems - they should not be viewed in isolation from one another.
- Research on customary practices and land tenure.
- Research on the wider political and legal contexts in the event of success/failure of traditional practices, particularly “*Hima*”.

Strengthening the Legal and Policy Framework

- Identifying existing customary laws governing “*Hima*” and other traditional approaches.
- Enabling existing “*Hima*” that are viable to survive.
- Enabling “*Himas*” that are not functioning well to be revived, in cases where local communities desire to do so.
- Establishing new pilot “*Hima*” as examples of best practices, in cases where there is the will to do so on the part of conservation agencies and local communities.
- Avoiding pitfalls and negative potentials (e.g. social, tribal, sectarian, political conflicts as well as ethnic or gender discrimination) and developing treatment modalities to address them in due time.
- Developing flexible governance mechanisms and empowering local communities
- Enabling the “*Hima*” to the needs of changing societies.
- Enabling the positive ethical principles and the progressive elements of traditional practices embedded in the “*Hima*” to inform planning and management of contemporary protected area systems.
- Developing governance mechanisms that protect simultaneously biodiversity and local livelihood.
- Developing clear enforcement mechanisms for “*Hima*” that are linked to laws and government institutions especially in pilot projects.
- Declaring and legally recognizing “*Hima*” in at least one government institution.

Improving Implementation of “Hima” Revival Projects

- Building on positive elements associated with “Hima”, e.g. links with existing local livelihoods, low economic and social costs and strengthening traditional knowledge, practices and institutions.
- Supporting/initiating pilot projects to revive and/or create “Hima”, in order to ensure that they are informed by available knowledge and experience, to help them set examples of best practice and to ensure monitoring and evaluation of management success.
- Working according to clear criteria or guiding principles.
- Stressing the principles of equity, gender and participation of all constituencies of the local community.
- Building capacity of local communities in conservation, management of natural resources and sustainability based on ethical principles.
- Identifying appropriate policy and institutional set up required establishing “Hima”.
- Identifying mechanisms for maximizing livelihood benefits in the “Hima”.
- Establishing monitoring mechanisms independent from local and government groups.
- Introducing effective modern tools whenever possible and applicable in the process of establishing “Hima” revival initiatives (e.g. situation analysis, stakeholder analysis, ecological surveys, etc.).
- Implementing pilot projects of “Hima” Revival in at least three different countries.
- Documenting successful initiatives of “Hima” revival and sharing knowledge with interested groups or national parties to replicate the process.
- Involving multidisciplinary teams in the implementation of “Hima” revival (including anthropologists, technical people, etc.).

Awareness Raising, Education and Communication

- Using the process of information gathering and its products to build awareness of the “Hima” and other traditional resource management systems.
- Issuing publications on the traditional approaches to conservation in the region and their link to poverty, gender issues.
- Issuing newsletter for traditional approaches/”Hima”.
- Developing targeted communication tools: newsletter, Website, booklet/brochure.
- Establishing a knowledge bank on the “Hima” and other traditional conservation practices of the region.

Raising Resources to Work on Advancing the “Hima” Concept

- Establishing a “Hima” fund to ensure sustainability in management, return of benefits equitably to members of the direct community and for revival of the local cultural heritage.

- Developing project proposals for national and regional pilot projects.
- Lobbying for government subsidies or budget allocations that take into consideration conservation or revival of effective and equitable traditional approaches.

In addition to:

- Promoting the concept in regional and global conservation policy making.
- Linking and creating networks between “*Hima*” initiatives worldwide.

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