

MINISTRY OF TOURISM (MOT)
COUNCIL FOR DEVELOPMENT AND RECONSTRUCTION (CDR)
REPUBLIC OF LEBANON

JAPAN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AGENCY (JICA)

THE STUDY ON
THE INTEGRATED TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLAN
IN THE REPUBLIC OF LEBANON

FINAL REPORT

Vol. 2 Master Plan Report

MARCH 2004



PADECO CO., LTD.

RECS INTERNATIONAL Inc.

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USD 1 = LBP 1,500

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PREFACE

In response to a request from the Government of the Republic of Lebanon, the Government of Japan decided to conduct the Study on the Integrated Tourism Development Plan in the Republic of Lebanon and entrusted the study to the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

JICA selected and dispatched a study team headed by Mr. Yuichiro Motomura of Padeco Co., Ltd, and consisted of Recs International Inc. to the Republic of Lebanon, between May 2003 and March 2004. In addition, JICA set up an advisory committee headed by Mr. Masayasu Kokubo, Secretary General of All Nippon Travel Agents Association between May 2003 and March 2004, which examined the study from specialist and technical point of view.

The team held discussions with the officials concerned of the Government of the Republic of Lebanon and conducted field surveys at the study area. Upon returning to Japan, the team conducted further studies and prepared this final report.

I hope that this report will contribute to the promotion of this project and to the enhancement of friendly relationship between our two countries.

Finally, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the officials concerned of the Government of the Republic of Lebanon for their close cooperation extended to the study.

March 2004

Kazuhisa Matsuoka
Vice President
Japan International Cooperation Agency

March 2004

Mrs. Sadako Ogata
President
Japan International Cooperation Agency
Tokyo, Japan

Letter of Transmittal

Dear Madam,

We are pleased to submit herewith the final report of “The Study on the Integrated Tourism Development Plan in the Republic of Lebanon”.

This report presents the results of the study, which was undertaken in Lebanon and in Japan from May 2003 to March 2004 by the Study Team, organized jointly by PADECO Co., Ltd. and Recs International Inc..

The Study Team, with a great deal of cooperation from diverse sectors of the people in Lebanon, has formulated a comprehensive set of development plans for the two subject areas of the Bekaa Valley and the Bcharre Highland. Because of the nature of planning process involving intensive participation of various stakeholders, we believe that the consequent plans are ready for implementation

We owe a great deal to many people for the completion of this report. We would like to express our deep appreciation and sincere gratitude to all those who extended their kind assistance and cooperation to the Study Team, in particular, the concerned officials of the Ministry of Tourism, the Council for Development and Reconstruction, and people in the subject areas.

We are very much thankful to the officials of your agency, the JICA Advisory Committee, the Ministry of Foreign Affaires, and the Ministry of Land and Transport.

We hope that the report will contribute to facilitating further socio-economic development in the Republic of Lebanon.

Very truly yours,



Yuichiro Motomura
Team Leader

The Study on the Integrated Tourism Development Plan
in the Republic of Lebanon

Final Report

List of Volumes

- Vol. 1 Executive Summary
- Vol. 2 Master Plan Report
- Vol. 3 Feasibility Study Report
- Vol. 4 Sector Review Report
- Vol. 5 Appendices

Volume Two
Master Plan Report

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List of Abbreviations

AFD	Agence Francaise de Development
ATCL	Automobile & Touring Club of Lebanon
ATM	Arab Trade Market
AWTTE	Arab World Travel & Tourism Exhibition
B1~B6	Project code for the Bcharre Study Area
BIA	Beirut International Airport
BK1~BK13	Project code for the Bekaa Valley Study Area
BTAC	Bcharre Tourism Action Council
BTDC	Bcharre Tourism Development Council
BVHC	Bekaa Valley Handicraft Cooperative
BVTDC	Bekaa Valley Tourism Development Council
CAS	Central Administration of Statistics
CDR	Council for the Development and Reconstruction of Lebanon
CHUD	Cultural Heritage and Urban Development
CIF	Cost, Insurance, and Freight
COM	Council of Ministers
Coop.	Cooperative
CREADEL	Social and Economic Development of Lebanon (NGO)
DGA	Directorate General of Antiquities
DGCA	Directorate General of Civil Aviation
DGM	Directorate General of Municipality
DGUP	Directorate General of Urban Planning
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIB	European Investment Bank
ESTs	Environmentally-sound Technologies
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
Fob	Freight on board
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GCF	Gross Capital formation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographic Information System
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation
IDAL	Investment Development Authority of Lebanon
ITB	International Tourismus-Borse
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MEA	Middle East Airline

MICE	Meeting, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibition
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
MOE	Ministry of Environment
MOEW	Ministry of Energy and Water
MOI	Ministry of Interior
MOPWT	Ministry of Public Works and Transportation
MOT	Ministry of Tourism
NCHT	National Council for Health Tourism
NCMS	National Center for Marine Sciences
NGO	Non-governmental Organizations
NTCL	National Tourism Council of Lebanon
OCW	Overseas Contract Worker
OMT	Organization Mundial Turismo
PCO	Professional Congress Organizer
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SMAP	Short and Medium Action Programme
SWOT	Strengths-Weakness-Opportunities-Threats
TMA	Trans Mediterranean Airline
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WTM	World Travel Market
WTO	World Tourism Organization
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

1.1.1 Study Rationale

(1) Economic Recovery and Tourism

Lebanon's economy has made a remarkable recovery from the war, supported by international aid programs, an open economic policy with the liberal banking system, and overseas remittance, among other factors. Particularly, "Horizon 2000", the US\$20 billion reconstruction program that the Government launched in 1993, helped to attain the observed high economic growth rates: 8% in 1994, and the 7% level sustained in the next three years. The tourism industry, which once contributed up to 20% of the GDP before the war, however, has not recovered fully, currently contributing 9% of the GDP.

(2) Policy and Institutional Settings

A tourism master plan containing 72 priority actions was prepared in 1997 with the technical assistance of the World Tourism Organization (WTO). Building on the Horizon 2000 and the WTO strategies, the Government of Lebanon set a national strategy for tourism development, focusing on eight priority areas, including the Qadisha Valley and the mountain areas. A coherent national policy for tourism development in Lebanon, however, is still to be established formally.

MOT's administrative functions include licensing and regulating and monitoring the development and management of tourism facilities throughout the country. The marketing function, which was transferred to MOT from the National Tourism Council of Lebanon (NTCL) in 1992, takes up a major portion (36.5% in 2002) of MOT's budget (US\$ 5.0 million in 2002), which is still small when compared to other tourist destination countries in the region. MOT accommodates the offices of the newly created National Council for Health Tourism (NCHT) and former NTCL personnel.

An Inter-Ministerial Council for Tourism Development exists, chaired by the Prime Minister, with ad hoc membership and irregular meetings to discuss various policy issues related to tourism. Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) has not provided funding for tourist accommodations or attractions by the private sector, but it can undertake tourism-related activities under the "Integrated Development and Environment" program. Many NGOs undertake activities that impact the tourism sector. The private sector is active and well organized in the tourism industry, but operates mainly in Beirut and its vicinity.

(3) Tourism in Lebanon's Socioeconomic Development

The macro economy of Lebanon is characterized by the large and increasing trade deficits that are compensated by capital inflow and net non-merchandise flow including overseas remittance and tourism receipt. As the economic growth has slowed down in recent years, and the Government cannot increase its expenditure much to maintain macro-economic stability, the tourism revenue as well as the overseas remittance would

be more important to fill the investment-savings gaps. The current Five Year Development Plan of Lebanon targeted at 15% of the GDP by 2003 as the tourism sector's contribution.

Tourism in Lebanon is expected to rectify the existing income disparities between regions, generating employment opportunities and alleviating poverty. The unemployment rate (10.7% respectively in 1998) is the highest in the Bekaa and the North, and the average income levels in Beirut and Mount Lebanon are 38% higher than the average in the North, the South and the Bekaa. Tourism facilities are concentrated also in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. To rectify these situations, regional tourism needs to be promoted to increase the length of tourist stay and tourist spending in tourist destinations away from the capital region.

While the visitor arrivals to major tourism sites are decreasing in recent years, the number of Lebanese visitors surpasses the number of foreigner visitors at most tourism sites. The importance of domestic tourism would increase as income levels increase in Lebanon. Also with the established tourism sites of international class, the development of domestic tourism through regional tourism development would constitute tourism important part of the differentiation strategy for the international tourism as well in Lebanon as a whole.

1.1.2 Study Background

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) contracted a consortium of PADECO Co. Ltd. and RECS International Inc. of Japan to begin work in May of 2003 on this government to government assistance project. The counterpart agency is the Ministry of Tourism (MOT), and the work is also being coordinated with the Council for the Development and Reconstruction of Lebanon (CDR).

The Study's primary goal is to create sustainable strategies and pilot projects that will protect and promote Lebanon's rich natural and cultural heritage and help Lebanon to return to its prominent role in regional and international tourism. Another equally important goal is to create strategies that will disperse resulting economic benefits to the study areas outside Beirut, including the Qazas of Bcharre, Baalbek, and Zahle.

1.2 Study Objectives and Areas

1.2.1 Objectives of the Study

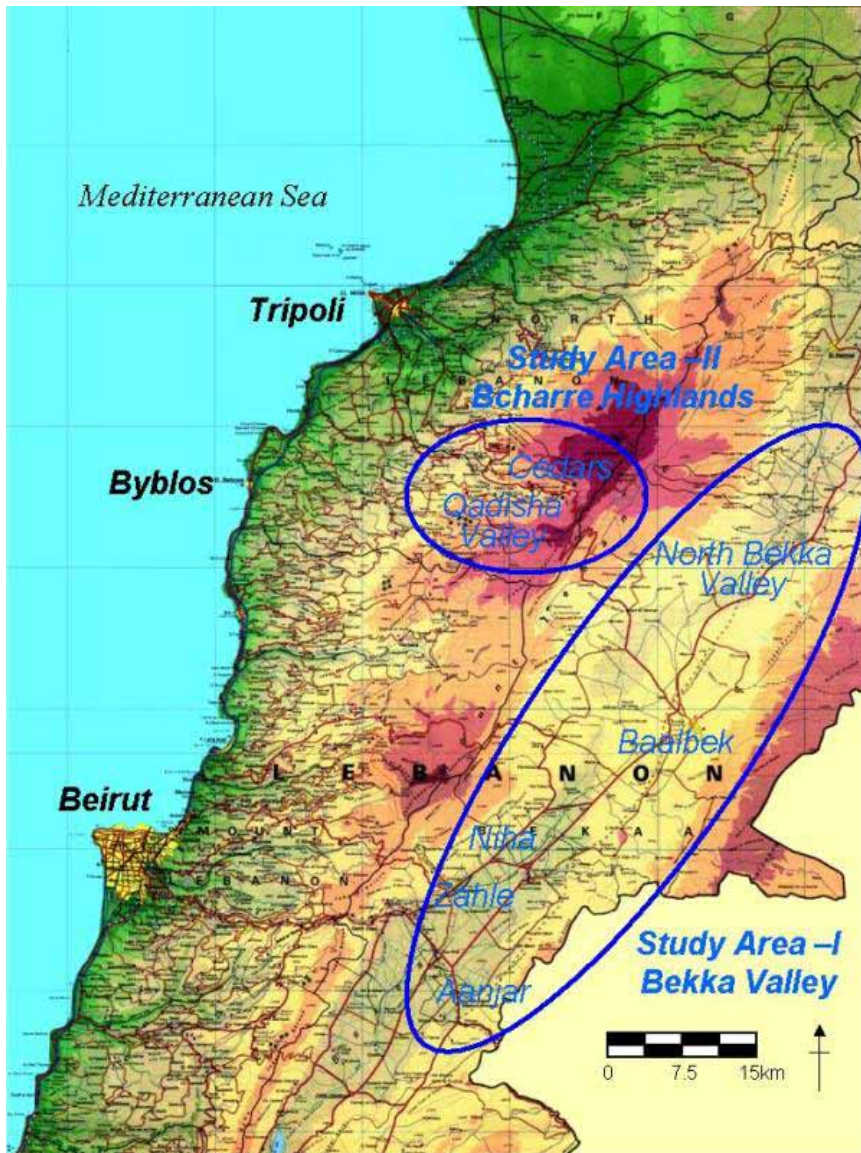
The Study has five objectives:

- to review and analyze present conditions in the tourism sector,
- to prepare regional tourism development master plans for the study areas,
- to formulate pilot projects and analyze them through feasibility studies,
- to transfer technology to the Ministry of Tourism through the Study, and
- to enhance the capacity of the Ministry of Tourism to promote tourism development.

1.2.2 Study Areas/Boundaries

In accordance with the Terms of Reference (TOR) agreed between the two governments, the JICA Study Team focuses on three of Lebanon's Qazas: Baalbek, Zahle, and Bcharre. The Qaza of Baalbek includes the contemporary city of Baalbek with its World Heritage site and surrounding villages. The Qaza of Zahle includes the City of Wine and Poetry, Zahle, with its famous cuisine and traditional Lebanese architecture. It also includes the Umayyad, World Heritage site of Aanjar, and the village of Niha with its cultural and natural heritage. The broad area including all of these study areas is designated as the Bekaa Valley. The Qaza of Bcharre includes the World Heritage site, the Cedars of the Lord and the Qadisha Valley, surrounding villages, and the ski area of the Cedars. This subject area is designated as the Bcharre Highlands. (Figure 1.2.1.).

Figure 1.2.1 Study Area



Source: JICA Study Team

1.3 Study Execution

1.3.1 Study Organization

The JICA Study Team comprising of 13 technical experts, supported by Lebanese staff and subcontractors, has been working very closely with MOT and CDR. The Government of Lebanon has established a Steering Committee to assist and guide the Study Team's work. In addition to MOT and CDR, the Steering Committee comprises representatives from the Ministries of Interior/Directorate General of Municipalities, Public Works and Transportation/Directorate General of Urban Planning, Culture/Directorate General of Antiquities (in coordination with UNESCO), and Environment, the Investment Development Authority of Lebanon, and the private sector (hotel, tourism/travel operators).

JICA has organized an Advisory Committee to provide guidance and advice to the Study Team. The Committee has had sessions with the JICA Study Team occasionally either in Lebanon or in Japan as the case may be. Officials of relevant ministries of the Japanese Government may participate in some meetings of the Committee as necessary. A list of members of the Steering Committee and the Advisory Committee as well as a list of Study Team members are shown in Appendix 1 (Volume 5).

1.3.2 Study Phases

(1) Phase 1

The JICA Study is divided into three phases. The first phase was from May through September, 2003. In early June, 2003, a preparatory work in Japan resulted in an Inception Report. The Inception Report included information on the Study's scope, procedures, and methodology, including implementation strategies.

The first team of technical experts arrived in Lebanon to begin work on June 23, 2003. JICA Study Team's mission is to work closely with MOT and CDR to survey demand, supply, and community needs. The JICA Study Team gathered baseline information from existing data and studies, held interviews and focus groups (85 interviews with government agencies, municipalities, other donors, NGOs, and the private sector and focus groups with each of the municipalities and local stakeholders in the main study areas), and observed and surveyed in the field (including interviews to passengers at the airport).

The JICA Study Team specifically analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of the tourism sector, in order to build upon Lebanon's authenticity – its distinctive cultural and natural identities, products, and comparative advantages of each study area. The JICA Study Team also held numerous meetings and workshops at MOT with the Steering Committee and others. The Progress Report was submitted in September to mark the completion of the JICA Study Team's Phase 1 effort.

(2) Phase 2

The second phase was from late September to December, 2003. From September

through November, the JICA Study Team worked in the field and the office with MOT to formulate regional tourism development master plans for the study areas. The master plans include recommendations that address the above weaknesses in the sector including recommendations for improved conservation, facility design, infrastructure, organization, and tourism promotion. Working with MOT/CDR, the JICA Study Team has formulated and selected priority projects. To complete Phase 2 work, the Interim Report was compiled in Japan in December of 2003 and immediately submitted to the Government of Lebanon.

(3) Phase 3

The third and final phase of the project began in late December, 2003 to continue through March, 2004. From January through February, JICA Study Team technical experts stayed in Lebanon at MOT completing feasibility studies for the priority projects and drafting final recommendations. The results were presented to MOT, CDR, and the Steering Committee in the 3rd steering committee meeting on 5th March, 2004. The results were also introduced to donor agencies and embassies in the donor meeting on 8th March 2004. The Minutes of the meeting are compiled in the Volume 5 Appendices.

Compiling the outcome of all the work through Phases 1-3, a Final Report has been prepared. The Report consists of the following five volumes:

- Volume 1 Executive Summary,
- 2 Master Plan Report,
- 3 Feasibility Study Report,
- 4 Sector Review Report, and
- 5 Appendices.

1.4 Report Organization

This volume is Volume 2: Master Plan Report. This report as a whole can be considered as draft master plans for regional tourism development in the Bekaa Valley and the Bcharre Highlands. In order for the reader to quickly comprehend the information contained in this Report, an Executive Summary is included as Volume 1 in the Draft Final Report.

Following Chapter 1, Chapter 2 explains in details how the adopted study approach is rather unique among regional tourism development plans in order to facilitate sustainable regional development led by the tourism sector. Part I presents tourism development strategies and projects for the Bekaa Valley and Part II for the Bcharre Highlands. Part III discusses implementation considerations.

1.5 JICA-Net Program

Since August 2003, the Study Team has been cooperating with the JICA-Net Program, which promotes information exchange via distance learning utilizing leading edge technology in computer communication. These sessions on tourism development have been held linking tourism experts and practitioners in Japan with concerned public

sector and private sector personnel in Lebanon via computer network. Details are presented in Appendix 8 (Volume 5)..

Chapter 2 Planning Methodology

2.1 Planning Approach to Regional Tourism Development

(1) Planning Approach

The Planning approach to the regional tourism development in Lebanon combines the technical approach by the JICA Study Team in close collaboration with MOT, CDR and other related agencies, and the participatory approach through communications with municipalities and representatives of the private sector as well as local people. The Study is conducted in stages through: (1) analysis on existing conditions, (2) evaluation of development potentials and constraints, (3) establishment of development strategy and frameworks; and (4) preparation of integrated tourism development plan. At each stage, the JICA Study Team, supported by MOT and CDR, has taken the initiative, but extensive consultation has been conducted with a wide range of stakeholders. The output of the consultation became input to analysis in the subsequent stage through the technical approach. Proposals by the Study Team were sent back to stakeholders to generate input to be reflected in the next stage. In this way, the technical approach and the participatory approach have been reconciled for the integrated tourism development plan. Also plan recommendations guard against the negative impacts of tourism including: damage to sites, increased traffic and wear and tear on infrastructure, disruption to a traditional way of life, changes to cultural authenticity, and changes to or loss of ecosystems and natural resources.

(2) Bases of the Study

The Study has been carried out, in principle, based on existing and readily available data, study reports and information, but limited surveys were carried out in cooperation with Lebanese experts and assistants to generate additional data. The Study has been based also on extensive consultation with officials and experts of MOT, CDR and other agencies, representatives of various tourism-related organizations in the private sector, and others concerned. To effect the participatory approach, focus group discussions and other consultative meetings were held in each of the Study areas at different stages of the Study. Local views were reflected and related input is incorporated in the Study by reconciling the technical approach and the participatory approach.

Main bases of the Study are summarized below for the three aspects of the regional tourism development: tourism supply, tourism demand and regional communities.

Table 2.1.1 Main Basis of Analysis

Aspect of regional tourism development	Main basis of analysis
Tourism supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaire survey for municipalities in the Study areas • Initial environmental examination (IEE) for natural and other resources • Statistics and study reports on tourism facilities, infrastructure, etc. • Field observations and assessment
Tourism demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaire survey for tour operators • Questionnaire survey for tourists at the international airport • Statistics and study reports on tourist visits, expenditures, etc.
Regional communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field visits to various tourism sites • Social survey as part of IEE • Focus group discussions by municipality • Statistics and study reports on socio-economy, living conditions, income, etc. • Field observations and interviews

Source: JICA Study Team

2.2 Technical Approach

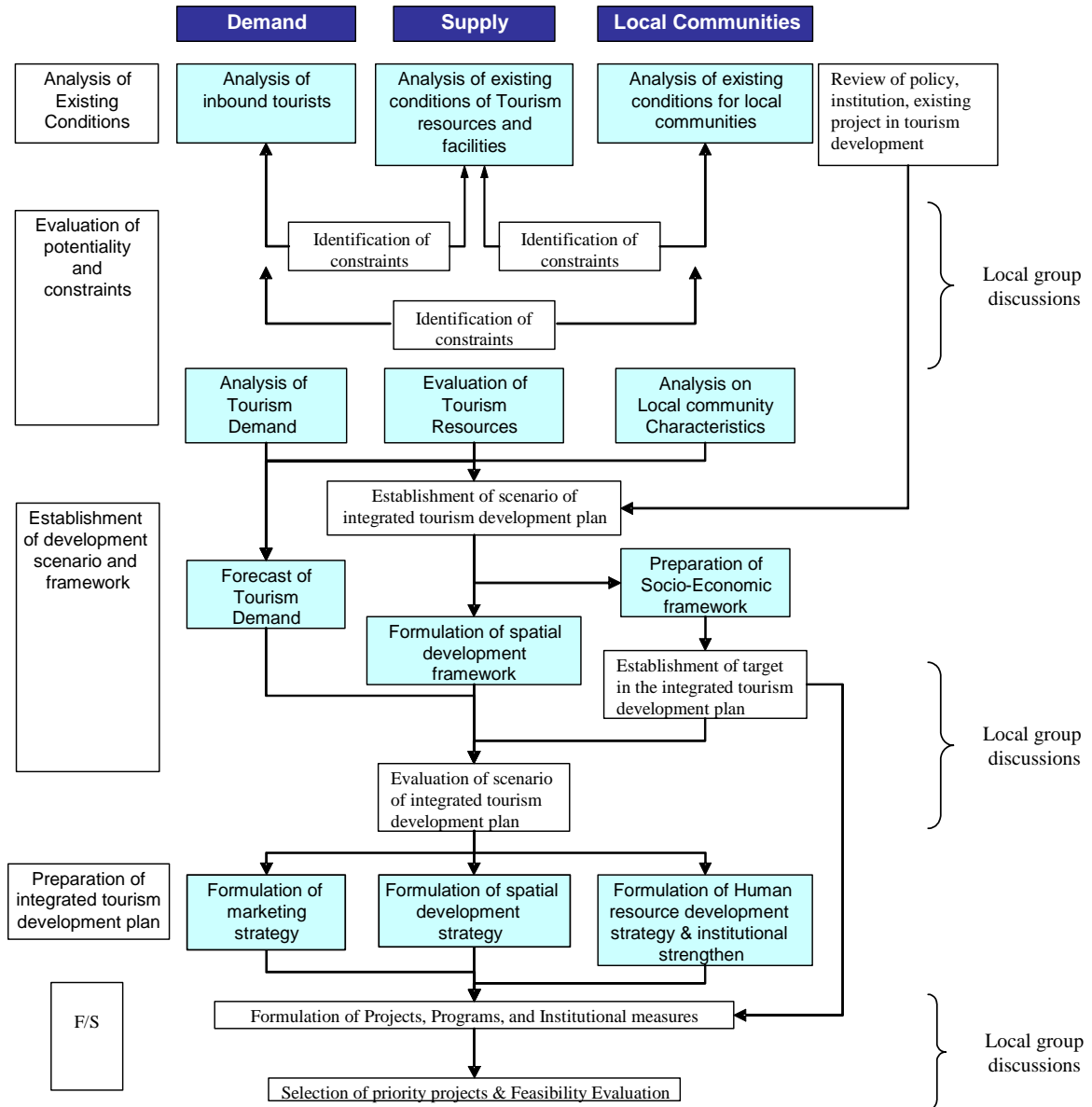
The technical approach examines the regional tourism development from three aspects: tourism supply, tourism demand, and regional communities. The planning procedure by this approach is illustrated in Figure 2.2.1. Timing of three rounds of local group discussions is also indicated. First, existing conditions are analyzed in the three aspects. Second, constraints are identified based on gaps between the three aspects.

Third, corresponding to the gaps identified, development strategy is established as follows. The supply-demand gap is filled in by expanding the tourism supply as tourism is basically demand-driven activities. The tourism supply can be expanded by developing various tourism resources, improving related infrastructure and facilities, and enhancing institutional capacity. Corresponding to the demand-community gap, the strategy is derived by asking how to enhance the capacity of the regional communities to meet the demand, through education, training and institutional development. The supply-community gap may be filled in by developing various tourism products that would help the community to enhance the quality of tourism supply. These tourism products may include specialty products, more or less unique to the region, to be created based on indigenous resources by the community initiative, and thematic tour routes linking related tourist attractions for value-added. Marketing is another essential means to fill in all the gaps.

Fourth, under the strategy established, specific measures are formulated, consisting of development projects, institutional measures, and programs combining both. These

measures through coordination and packaging will make the integrated tourism development plan.

Figure 2.2.1 Planning Approach to Regional Tourism Development



Source: JICA Study Team

2.3 Participatory Approach

(1) Focus group discussions on existing conditions

During the first stage of the Study, focus group discussions were held in the municipalities of Bcharre (July 26), Baalbek (August 22), Zahle (August 28), Niha (August 28), and Aanjar (September 5) to clarify existing conditions and to discuss various issues related directly and indirectly to tourism development in respective areas.

In particular, the following guiding questions were asked at each session.

- i) What roles do you play in your community/municipality and how do you like them?
- ii) What resources or strengths do you think you have in your community/municipality for tourism development?
- iii) What do you think are constraints or weaknesses of your community/municipality for tourism development?
- iv) What kind of tourism do you want to develop further in your community/municipality?
- v) Could you identify disadvantaged people in your community/municipality and how do you think they can be involved in tourism development?

The question i) was asked to clarify the position of tourism in respective community/municipality and the motivation for its promotion. The questions ii) and iii) aimed to extract ideas for tourism development which should utilize strengths and rectify weaknesses. The question iv) intended to elicit aspirations and preferences that local people might have for particular types of tourism. The question v) was asked to raise awareness of participants for the socially deprived and to make them realize the objectives of tourism development such as job creation and poverty alleviation.

(2) Group interviews on strategy and project ideas

The focus group discussions clarified the strengths and the weaknesses that respective municipalities have for tourism development as perceived by local communities. Under the basic strategy established by the technical approach, specific strategies are derived in such a way that would utilize and enhance the strengths and rectify or overcome the weaknesses in each community/municipality.

The second round of group discussions was conducted during the second stage of the Study to derive local input with regard to strategies and project ideas. After self introduction of participants at the beginning of each session, the JICA Study Team presented broad strategies formulated to reflect the focus group discussions. Two key questions were asked to participants.

- i) Which strategy do you think is most important?
- ii) Why have you selected it as most important?

Most strategies proposed by the JICA Study Team were received favorably by the participants at each group interview session. The participants proposed additional strategies, and intensive discussions took place. Participants commented on possible beneficiaries of some strategies and potential problems associated with different strategies. After enhancing the motivation of the participants through the discussions on strategies, the participants were asked to comment on project ideas presented by the JICA Study Team. Results are summarized in subsections on stakeholders, and reflected in project formation.

(3) Group interviews on proposed programs and projects

The third round of group discussions was conducted at the beginning of the third stage of the Study in Bcharre on January 13, Aanjar and Zahle on January 15, Niha and Baalbek on January 16, and North Bekaa on January 17, 2004. At each session, the JICA Study Team presented the strategy, expected tourism demand, proposed programs, projects and activities, and possible implementing arrangements for respective areas. The presentation at some sessions emphasized more specific proposals for respective areas such as admission fee collection in Bcharre, eco-activities and eco-lodge in Niha, thematic tour circuits in Zahle, and promotion activities for rural tourism in North Bekaa.

Participants were asked to make comments on any proposal presented by the JICA Study Team, identify key players or local champions in implementing the proposals, and provide ideas on how the proposals would be implemented. Main points raised by the participants are summarized in Table 2.3.1. Most proposals were favorably received by the participants, and strong expectations were expressed by them for the implementation – their major concern. Varying views were expressed in different areas by public and private sector participants concerning the implementing arrangements, particularly the roles of the public sector.

Photo 2.3.1
Group Interview for
the Steering Committee Members
on 14 August, 2003



Photo 2.3.2
Group Interview for
Private Sectors in Bcharre
on 16 October, 2003

Table 2.3.1 Summary of Group Interviews on Proposed Programs and Projects (1/2)

Bcharre	Aanjar	Zahle
<p>Comments on proposals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A training school for tourism may be necessary, but its priority is low. • The site management as proposed is very important strategy to promote tourism in Bcharre. • Participants generally agreed to admission fee collection, but stepwise approach is necessary to convince the Maronite patriarchate. • The proposed visitors center should provide brochures, maps, guides and other information and also a small café; it should be operated by a private entity. • The cable car linking Bcharre-Cedars-up to Qanet at Sawada is a long time dream, but may be difficult to materialize. • Large tourism projects are necessary to attract tourists all year round. • The proposed buffer zone around the Cedars grove is preferable. • No car policy in Qadisha Valley is reasonable. 	<p>Comments on proposals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship between the proposed development and the town should be clarified. • Zoning and urban planning issues would be important in tourism development. • The area for the proposed spring water garden is swampy and the proposal may not be adequate. • The municipality owns the water mill site and a portion of the parking lot where the souk is located, and the proposed land uses are acceptable. • Design drawing should reflect actual conditions of the site, and the location of parking area may be reconsidered. 	<p>Comments on proposals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The idea of wine route is very old and valid, and the proposed Bacchus wine route is very important. • Too much emphasis on vine yards may result in inadequate use of land and over production. • The municipality tried to implement a cultural center but it did not materialize due to local conflict of interest. • Training on B&B's is a good proposal.
<p>Local champions</p> <p>Bcharre Tourism Development council</p>	<p>Local champions</p> <p>Existing unofficial Tourism Development committee to be formalized soon</p>	<p>Local champions</p> <p>Mayor, cultural heritage NGOs</p>
<p>Ideas for implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A special purpose company with good fund should be established. • If the public sector is involved, nothing will ever happen. • Private sector people should be involved in implementing organizations, and their activities supervised by MOT, MOE, MOC, etc. 	<p>Ideas for implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local churches should be involved in implementation. • The municipality can make a small contribution, possibly in the form of land, and TDC could undertake fundraising. • The Jewelers Syndicate of Lebanon may be interested in investing in the souk. 	<p>Ideas for implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local funding could be realized through the municipality, while Zahle's Diaspora is weak. • The large scale tourism development in the western Bekaa should be examined as it would affect tourism development in Zahle and other sites.

Source: JICA Study Team

Table 2.3.1 Summary of Group Interviews on Proposed Programs and Projects (2/2)

Niha	Baalbek	North Baalbek
<p>Comments on proposals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed eco-lodge would benefit the local community more and its infrastructure costs would be smaller, if it is located in the village. The proposed camp should be located in a more rural setting. The municipality owns a site along the vehicle carriage route, 1-2 Km from the village that can be used for proposed facilities. The eco-lodge would better be built on land owned by the municipality. 	<p>Comments on proposals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The trails map should be improved to show the location of main facilities. The Ras Al Ain trail should be linked to the Mercury temple as well, and linkages between the two trails created. A third trail to the Garroud barracks and links to the grotto should be considered. Eco-tourism featuring horse back riding should be included. Religious tourism should also be included, as Shi'ite pilgrims would be interested in visiting the new mosque. The municipality has its plan to create a heritage museum near the visitors center at the Qala'a on municipality owned land. The museum would better be in the medina as proposed, and an open theatre for cultural activities should also be provided in the city. Baalbek should emphasize cultural heritage tourism. 	<p>Comments on proposals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The access route to Aleppo and Hermel should be provided to encourage regional tourism. The recognition of local heritage, including water mills and small farm houses, by the proposed plan is appreciated. More than one project is necessary to link Qaa to other parts of the Bekaa. Education components on archaeology etc. should be included in the proposal. Qaa should not be at the end of tour circuit but be linked to other areas. More sporting activities need to be promoted such as horse back riding and river rafting. Organic food production should be promoted. A water pond near the visitors center and hunting as visitor activity should be added. Tourism activities should be coordinated.
<p>Local champions</p> <p>Mayor, a few members of the community, Festival council</p>	<p>Local champions</p> <p>Municipality, Tourism committee, Greek Catholic Waqf, NGOs (e.g. CREADEL), private sector</p>	<p>Local champions</p> <p>Municipalities, NGOs, private sector, churches.</p>
<p>Ideas for implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The municipality may be able to contribute land for the eco-lodge and agro-processing facilities and up to US\$ 20,000. Private and Diaspora funds would also be available. Central government involvement or the creation of a publicly owned institution would be bound to fail. 	<p>Ideas for implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incentives for local investors are necessary as well as guarantees against risk involved. The municipality can play a role, however limited, in funding the implementation. The loan facility of the IDAL program appears attractive, but its 3% interest loan would become effectively 9% loan if other costs are included. 	<p>Ideas for implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voluntary youth camps should be involved to facilitate the implementation. Planning and training for tourism development should involve university program.

Source: JICA Study Team

PART I

THE BEKAA VALLEY VIRTUAL MUSEUM

Chapter 3 The Regional Setting - Bekaa Valley

3.1 The Natural Environment

3.1.1 Existing Conditions

(1) Topography

The Study Area covers an area of 2,738 km², with an average width of 30 km (E-W) and an average length of 90 km (N-S) in the Bekaa Valley. The Study Area includes Baalbek and Zahle Qazas and covers 66 % of the Bekaa Governorate. It is located between the Anti Lebanon and the Mount Lebanon mountain ranges. It is bordered by the Syrian Arab Republic on both northern and eastern fronts, and the Beirut-Damascus road to the south. The Bekaa plain in the Study Area is a land depression situated at an average altitude of 900 m. The Study Area contains the Litani River, which flows south. [Source: *Biological Diversity of Lebanon, MoA, UNEP, 1996*]

(2) Geology

Geology in the Study Area is constituted of carbonate rocks that range in age from Middle Jurassic to Eocene. Miocene alluvial fans extensively cover the basic Jurassic rocks. Pliocene-Quaternary deposit covers the lower part of the River Miocene alluvial fans. [Source: *National Action Program to Combat Desertification, MoA, June 2003*]

(3) Land Use and Land Cover

The land cover of the Study Area is mainly grassland, agricultural area, and forest and other woodland, roughly estimated at 50 %, 30 %, and 10 % of the total land area respectively.

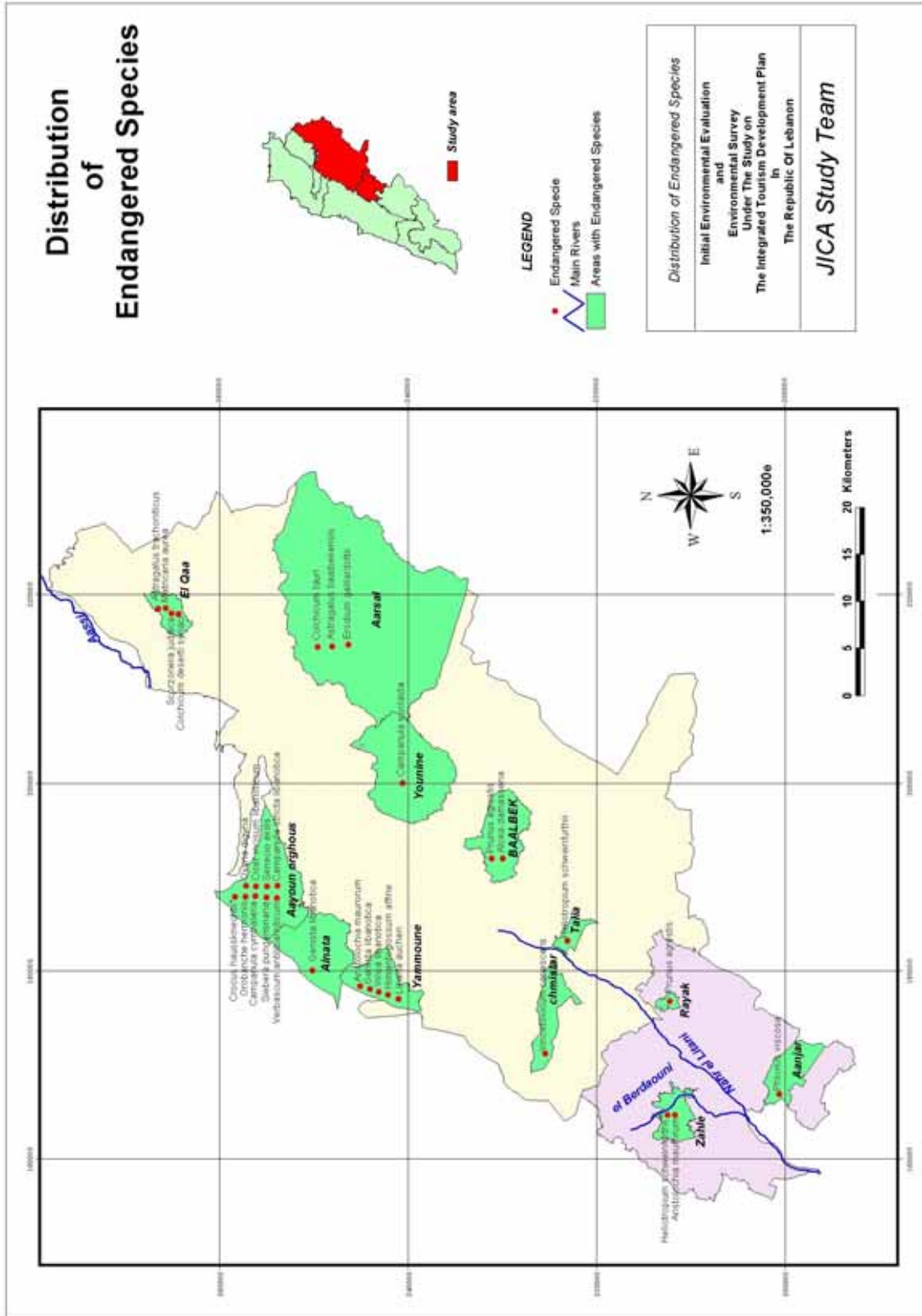
(4) Flora and Fauna

The vegetation series found in the Study Area belong to the pre-steppe Mediterranean ensemble that contains four levels. First level: Its altitude's limits are between approximately 900 and 1400 m and between around 1000 and 1500 m. The arborescent grouping corresponds to formations of *Quercus calliprinos* whose distribution varies between 20 % to 40% and where *Pyracantha coccinea* and *Acer hermoneum* are present. Second level: Its altitude's limits vary between approximately 1400 and 1800 m. A mixed series of *Quercus calliprinos* and *Quercus infectoria* is to be found at this zone. Third level: This zone gives the appearance of an arborescent steppe where *Juniperus* is mixed with *Quercus calliprinos* and *Quercus infectoria*. Fourth level: It is at an altitude of 2400 m with *Juniperus excelsa*. In the Study Area 23 endangered species of flora were reported (Figure 3.1.1.).

The Bekaa plain is at the meeting point of the most favorable environment and the most hostile one. This mixture embraces 72 species of birds. Rare species include two species of shrews (Bi-color white-toothed shrew (Rayak), large white-toothed shrew

(Aanjar) and 11 species of bats including the Kuhl's pipistrelle found in Baalbek. The detail of flora and fauna is described in Annex 2.1 (Bekaa).

Exhibit 3.1.1 Distribution of Endangered Species (Plant)



(5) Temperature

Bekaa Valley can be very hot in the summer (up to 40 degrees C), although nights in Baalbek along the Ras Al Ain and in Zahle along the Berdawni river are quite pleasant. The region is cold in the winter (as low as 13 degrees C). The air is dry (humidity of 15 to 50%) with light winds and low rainfall (250 mm annually).

3.1.2 Initial Environmental Examination (IEE)

A screening was carried out using existing data under the JICA format. The purpose of the screening is to identify potential environmental problems with regard to the proposed projects. As a result of screening, further environmental examination and EIA are judged not required. Details of examination by each factor are shown in Table 3.1.1. Based on the examination of the screening as presented and discussed in Table 3.1.1, a scoping procedure is judged not necessary because further environmental examination is not required.

Table 3.1.1 JICA Format for Screening (Tourism) in Baalbek and Zahle

Environmental Item	Description	Evaluation	Remarks (Reason)
Social Environment			
1	Resettlement	Resettlement due to land occupancy (transfer of rights of residence/land ownership)	(N) No resettlement is expected
2	Economic Activities	Loss of bases of economic activities, such as land, and change of economic structure	(N) No negative impacts. Positive impact is assumed.
3	Traffic and Public Facilities	Impacts on schools, hospitals and present traffic conditions, such as the increase of traffic congestion and accidents	(N) No big traffic flow is expected comparing with existing traffic flow. Traffic to be mitigated in Zahle by municipal improvements
4	Split of Communities	Community split due to interruption of area traffic	(N) There is no factor regarding this item.
5	Cultural Property	Damage to or loss of the value of churches, temples, shrines, archaeological remains or other cultural assets	(N) Positive impact. Cultural property will be well maintained with management plan.
6	Water Rights and Rights in Common	Obstruction of fishing rights, water rights, rights of common	(N) No change of right to drinking or irrigation water.
7	Public Health Condition	Deterioration of public health and sanitary condition due to generation of garbage and the increase of vermin	(N) No change is expected with Public Health Condition.
8	Waste	Generation of construction and demolition waste, debris and logs	(N) No significant construction works are expected.
9	Hazards (Risk)	Increase in risk of landslides, cave-ins and accidents	(N) No significant construction works are expected.
Natural Environment			
10	Topography and Geology	Changes of valuable topography and geology due to excavation or filling work	(N) No change of topography is expected.
11	Soil Erosion	Topsoil erosion by rainfall after reclamation and vegetation removal	(N) There is no factor regarding this item.
12	Groundwater	Change of distribution of groundwater by large-scale excavation	(N) No significant construction works are expected.
13	Hydrological Situation	Changes of river discharge and riverbed condition due to changes of habitat conditions	(N) There is no factor regarding this item.
14	Coastal Zone	Coastal erosion and sedimentation due to landfill or change in marine condition	(N) There is no coastal zone.
15	Fauna and Flora	Obstruction of breeding and extinction of species due to changes of habitat conditions	(N) Tourism facilities will be established to avoid impacting the important fauna and flora.
16	Meteorology	Changes of temperature, precipitation, wind, etc. due to large-scale land reclamation and building construction	(N) There is no factor regarding this item
17	Landscape	Changes of topography and vegetation due to reclamation. Deterioration of aesthetic harmony by structures	(N) There is no factor regarding this item. Recommending policies to protect landscapes
Pollution			
18	Air Pollution	Pollution caused by exhausted gas or toxic gas from vehicles and factories	(N) The increase of tourist vehicles is not much compared with present amounts.
19	Water Pollution	Pollution by inflow of slit, sand and effluent into rivers and groundwater	(N) Tourist excreta will be treated by new system.
20	Soil Contamination	Contamination of soil by dust and chemicals, such as herbicides	(N) There is no factor regarding this item.
21	Noise and Vibration	Noise and vibration generated by vehicles	(N) The increase of tourist vehicles is not much compared with present amounts.
22	Land Subsidence	Deformation of land and land subsidence due to the lowering of groundwater table	(N) There is no factor regarding this item.
23	Offensive Odor	Generation of exhaust gas and offensive odor by facility construction and operation	(N) There is no factor regarding this item.
Overall Evaluation: Either IEE or EIA is necessary for the project implementation?		(N)	EIA is not necessary for the project implementation because all items are N.

Y: Yes N: No U: Unknown

3.1.3 Key Environmental Problems Related to Tourism

Key environmental problems identified through the IEE and proposed mitigation measures are shown in Table 3.1.2.

Table 3.1.2 Proposals Related to Environment

Location	Key deficiency	Proposed Measure
Baalbek City	No particular key deficiency	Support for CHUD infrastructure improvements
North Bekaa Valley	Small forest area (forest cover 0~5%)	Landscape preservation
Zahle	Water pollution in Berdawni River	Establishment of the environmental awareness campaign to keep the river clean.
Niha	Small forest area (forest cover 0~2%)	Comprehensive environmental management and landscape preservation
	Absence of sewage treatment	Installation of sewers to Rayak Sewage Treatment Plant
Aanjar	Unattractive environment near ruin (modern intrusions)	Plantation for screening modern structures outside archeological site boundary

Source: MoA / UNDP, 1996 and others.

(1) Fauna and Flora

During the construction phase, fauna and flora will be not negatively affected because of the tourism facilities will be constructed avoiding the habitats of important fauna and flora.

(2) Air Pollution and Noise

During the construction and operating phases air quality and noise will not have negative effects because the construction will not be of too large a scale and the increase of tourist vehicles is not so much compared to the present level.

(3) Water Quality and Solid Wastes

During the construction and operating phases water quality and solid wastes will not pose any serious problems because the construction will not be of too large a scale and the increase of wastes by tourists is not so much compared to the present level.

(4) Other Aspects

During the construction and operating phases all of other aspects will not be negatively affected.

3.2 Tourism Resources and Products

3.2.1 Key Resources

A selection of the region's key resources is summarized as follows. They are reviewed with respect to the key segments of tourism or user groups that are making use of them. Only the most important resources are highlighted in this table. This represents the customer-focused approach used in this analysis.

Baalbek's internationally famed ancient ruins serve as a banner attraction mainly for the cultural market and for international image-building purposes. One could say it is the country's top resource for international tourism. In addition to other cultural tourism resources, this master plan recognizes that the valley possesses a broader range of assets, including its mild weather, agricultural productiveness, fine scenery, and a mixture [for the Middle East] of top quality food and drinks including spirits, pastries, and dairy products that can be enjoyed in pleasant town atmosphere. This is in addition to the history and charm that some of its towns offer.

In fact most of the leisure and recreational activities in the Bekaa Valley are related to day visits rather than overnight stays, generated by Lebanese and Diaspora visitors on weekends and holidays. With regard to foreigners, the market is primarily Levantine, mainly Syrians with some Jordanian visitor volume. The volume of international tour groups into the Valley is limited but promising.

3.2.2 Strengths and Weaknesses

(1) Key Strengths

The following factors relate to the Valley's strengths with respect to its competitiveness as an international tourism destination.

- The banner cultural attraction of Baalbek Qala'a: It is the only internationally known place in this valley and is Lebanon's best known heritage site.
- Rich stock of cultural resources: The Valley possesses a great variety of cultural resources widely distributed.
- The nation's "breadbasket": The Valley is famed for its variety of food products and gastronomy.
- Zahle's sophistication: The city offers a mix of historic architecture, fine dining, shopping and entertainment, and stages a number of cultural events to celebrate its heritage.
- Scenic beauty: The Valley offers varied panoramas that contrast nicely with Lebanon's coastal terrain and with Syria's landscapes.
- Accessibility to markets: located within a brief drive from two major metropolitan areas, Beirut and Damascus, the Valley can emerge as a favorite weekend destination for leisure and recreational purposes.
- Willing communities: Many community leaders and business people have relations and business contacts in foreign countries which they can tap to invest their businesses. Many have studied and worked abroad and know something about tourism.

Table 3.2.1 Key Resources and Products in the Bekaa Valley Study Area

User group	Key resources	Relevant travel product, comment
Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Baalbek ancient ruins -Baalbek Palmyra Hotel (icon) -Baalbek architectural fabric - Aanjar ancient ruins - Zahle historic center - Zahle Handicraft shops - Zahle cultural events - Niha 2 Roman temples. - Niha Festivals 	Heavy Lebanese/Diaspora recreational visits. Inclusive tour groups ex-Beirut on day visits to Baalbek, Zahle, Aanjar or on circuits to/from Syria or 1-2 day packages. Largely expat & western visitors and minimal Arab visitors. Except for Baalbek ruins, ancient sites offer minimal interpretive information. Linkages of sites with adjacent towns are also weak.
General Interest and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Zahle's Berdawni River and restaurant zone -Zahle's Our Lady of Bekaa tower shrine (panoramic view) -Zahle's shopping & museums -Zahle's cultural traditions -Tanaïl Monastery farm -Aanjar gold and Rashaiya silver -Aanjar restaurant zone -vineyard visits -Assi Riverside restaurants near Hermel 	Heavy Lebanese/Diaspora recreational visits. Daytime outings for families, friendly groups focusing on dining, recreational shopping, some festivals, sight-seeing in central valley area. Riverside restaurants on the Assi near Hermel constitute a northerly pole for leisure activity. Limited performing arts focused in Zahle. This is largely recreation & relaxation activity rather than tourism, partly dependent on second home usage for families living in/near Beirut.
Nature-based (Hikers/Walkers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -scenic foothills extending from Zahle to Niha & beyond -Assi River for rafting - high mountain hiking trails -remote village hiker houses -Caving 	Handful of nature-oriented tour operators selling eco-tours. Some 1-2 day hikes by youth associations, NGOs sponsoring trips. Signage or literature on recommended routes absent & specialist knowledge of clubs/associations essential.

Source: JICA Study Team

(2) Key Weaknesses

- Cultural sites: They are heavily concentrated in Baalbek.
- Failure to cultivate various market segments: Tourism to the valley relies substantially on cultural travel, which focuses mainly on one site, that of Baalbek.
- Lack of stewardship for tourism: Most of the towns have no awareness of tourists' expectations and are not thinking in terms of destination development. This applies both to the government officials and to business leaders.
- Little use of distinct traditions: The Valley's store of history from different eras contains stories and themes that are not effectively portrayed at its cultural sites or museums or in its arts and crafts, to enliven, enlighten and entertain.
- Fragmentary efforts to promote: There is no body promoting positive images or branding of the Bekaa Valley, its travel offerings other than Baalbek and Aanjar, or the variety of agricultural products originating in this breadbasket.
- Minimal interpretive information: For persons of different ages and cultures there is a minimum of interpretive information to enrich and educate the visitor about city center and key sites and make them more memorable. Professional guides are few.

The city of Zahle is generally an exception to the weaknesses raised above. The town of Aanjar also demonstrates some understanding of the workings of tourism.

3.3 Infrastructure and Facilities

3.3.1 Infrastructure

In this subsection, the transport infrastructure such as road system, public transport, and terminals is reviewed, and the social infrastructure, such as water supply and sewerage, electricity, and telephone is reviewed from the tourism point of view.

(1) Existing conditions

a) Transport Infrastructure

The road network for tourism in the Bekaa Valley consists of two international highways, and supporting national primary roads. The physical condition of the international highways at present are generally adequate for tourism use, except unsightly landscapes, traffic jams on security checkpoints, and shortage of signage. The existing artery will be upgraded or a bypass provided by 2005¹ for the whole section to make it a dual carriageway of 4-lane standards. Markings and signage along the road will be equipped with international standards, but signage and other facilities that benefit tourism promotion is not part of the upgrading plan.

The primary national road supporting tourism traffic circulation in the Valley provides two-lane capacity with some inadequate sections. Access for Niha village and connection to Bcharre, Faraya, Bikfaya and Hermel are served by primary roads. Secondary roads and municipality roads are utilized for local traffic, designed for internal circulation. Additionally, systematic naming by road section is uncommon in Bekaa Valley.

¹ Gicome Consulting, Dar al Handasah Naji Taleb (management consultant)

The public transport system installed in the Bekaa Valley is designed for local circulation. Well-organized express buses operate between Beirut and Damascus stopping at Chtaura. Informal transport services with “service” and taxis have terminals in Chtaura, Zahle and Baalbek.

b) Social infrastructure

i) Potable water

In Zahle, potable water is provided from 5 springs and 3 wells. A treatment plant with 8,000 m³ per day capacity treats the water before flowing into the supply network, which connects to 15,000 subscribing houses. The supply network is composed of over 15,000 m arterials and over 67 km distribution pipe. The Zahle Water Authority is the responsible organization for water treatment, with financial assistance of MOEW. The existing system covers 80 % of households. There is a restriction on the hours of supply.

In the Niha village, potable water is mainly provided by springs. There are 3 wells in the village; however, they are not used for potable water due to lack of equipment and pollution.

There is supply network installed in the 1940s, in bad condition. The Zahle Water Authority is responsible for the Niha water supply, but actually the municipality is trying to find assistance to replace the existing network.

In Aanjar, potable water is served from 2 wells and one springs. Quality of the water is tested every 3 months, and chlorine is added to the supply if necessary. The Aanjar municipality rehabilitated and expanded their supply network with financial assistance of the MOEW in 1993, covering all the residents of the village. A circular system is adopted in the system to save unused water.

In Baalbek, a potable water network was developed in 1930s by the municipality, which has been degraded. The Baalbek Water Authority is responsible for the water supply system, but due to the lack of institutional capacity, MOEW is in charge directly. There are 6 springs and 23 wells in Baalbek supplying over 44000 m³ of water per day. Two main springs are mainly used for potable water, and the existing supply network covers 75 % of residents. However, due to network conditions, most people depend largely on polluted wells or buying water for their daily water use. The water and wastewater project funded by the World Bank has started under the CDR supervision, to cover 96% of the population in the Study Area.

In Qaa, practically the municipality is taking charge of water supply, and supervised the network replacement work for 10 months in 2003, funded by MOEW. The water is taken from one existing well, and is supplied without treatment. Water is served daily for all the residents in the village, but in summertime, there are restricted hours.

ii) Sewerage

Wastewater treatment is the responsibility of the municipalities. In Zahle, wastewater is collected by a sewerage network, and at present, no treatment is provided. Construction of wastewater treatment facility has been initiated with the Italian fund and will finish in 2004. Septic tanks are installed in mountainous areas at a distance from the main line.

The municipality rehabilitated the existing network in 1998.

In Niha, 50 % of the village residents are covered by the 1,200-meter-length collection network installed in 1997. However there is no treatment plant. According to the study of MOEW, 2,385 m of pipes should be added to cover all residents of Niha.

In Aanjar, a new network constructed in 2003 collects wastewater for 70% of residents. MOEW paid for the main lines and the municipality took charge of rest of the network. However, there is no treatment facility at present. The municipality is negotiating with neighbors to share the cost of treatment plant construction.

In Baalbek, 60.5% of residents are covered by the existing collection network, 23 km of which have been rehabilitated by the recent World Bank fund. Although a treatment plant exists, there is no connection with the collection network so far. Once the network is connected to the treatment plant, all the residents must connect to the sewerage system. The treatment is based on the activated sludge process plus chlorination. Capacity is 12,500 m³ /day with possibility of extension to 25,000 m³ /day after 2008. The quality of effluent water will be below the Lebanese standards with BOD at 35 mg/l and suspended solids at 30 mg/l. The treated water will be discharged or reused for irrigation purposes.

In Qaa, there is no sewage network or treatment facility.

iii) Others

Regarding electricity, distribution networks are already completed in major towns and settlements. The Zahle Qaza is connected to the Inter-Arab power supply main line. The municipal area is served by subscriber telephones as well as mobile phones.

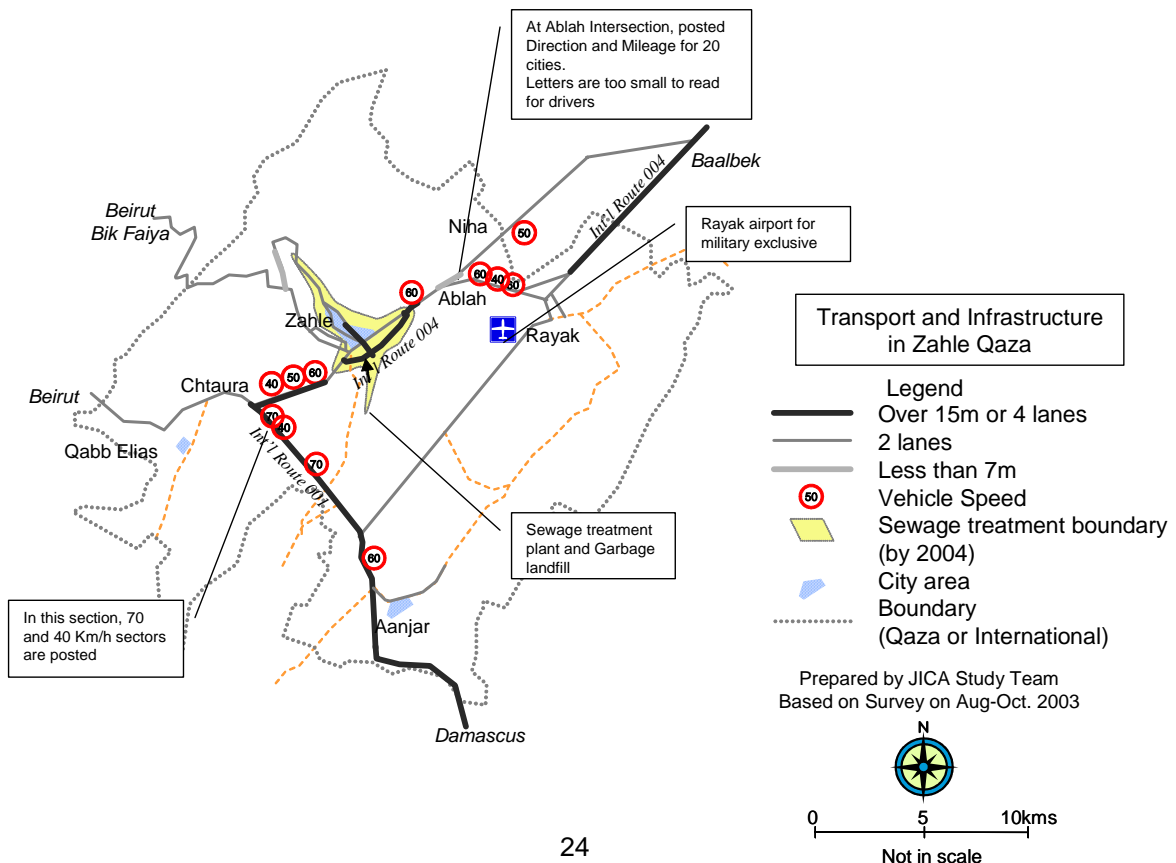
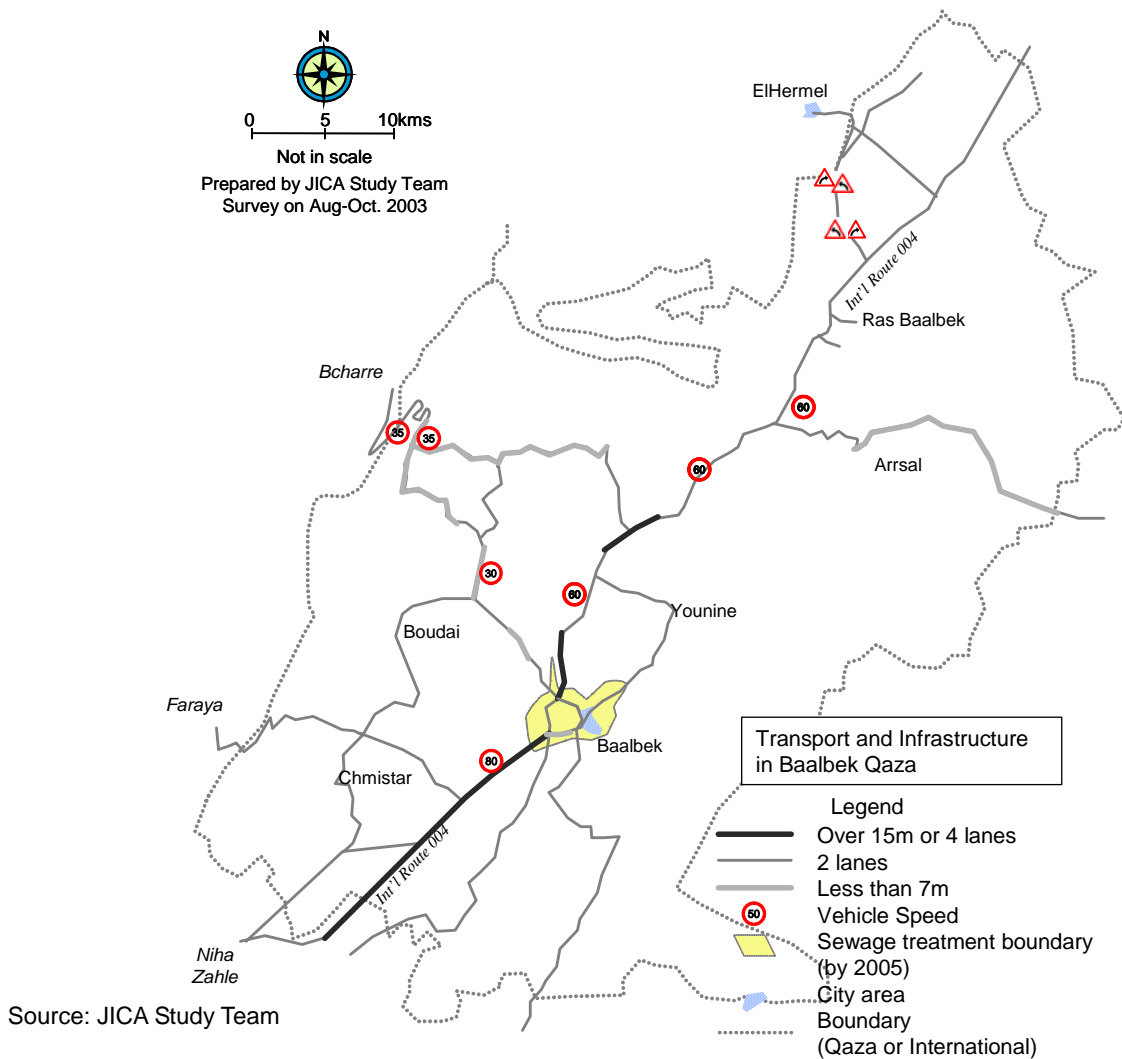


Figure 3.3.1 Transport and Infrastructure in Baalbek Qaza



(2) Required Solutions

The need for infrastructure development for Bekaa Valley tourism is to enhance serviceability effectively to cover the large area. Sparse distribution of tourism resources over a large area requires careful planning for effective infrastructure development.

i) Types of programs

Regarding transport infrastructure, the emphasis should be placed on smooth traffic circulation on the artery and effective access to selected tourism attractions. Regarding sewerage, alternative treatment methods should be adopted for small communities, rather than construction of expensive sewer networks.

ii) Key actors to implement programs, policies

CDR and MOPWT undertake international/national road development. MOI and the World Bank established a loan for municipal road development in 2001.

Table 3.3.1 Required Solutions

Types of Program	Policies needed	Key actor
Stable broad circulation in Bekaa Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International road improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Completed by 2005 • Primary road improvement • Maintain scenic landscapes • Connection with international and primary roads • Guide signage to identify communities and primary tourism resources 	CDR, MOPWT, MOT
Comfortable transport in cities and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic management (include parking control) • Pedestrian circulation and guidance • Unification of pavement materials • Planting Plans 	Municipality, MOI (World Bank), CDR
Public transport and terminal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reform the informal transport and strengthen private operators • Improve pedestrian circulation in Zahle and Baalbek • Strategic route setting for tourism promotion 	MOPWT, CDR
Potable water quality control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land use control of water catchment areas • Regular quality control 	MOPWT, MOE, Water Authority, MOEW
Sewerage Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced septic tank equipment for community level with education element • Extension of existing treatment area 	Municipality, MOI (World bank), CDR
Solid waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public campaign for cleaning up tourist areas 	Municipality, MOI
Telecommunication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply international public phone equipment 	MOTP

Source: JICA Study Team

(3) Key Proposed Measures

Table 3.3.2 Key Proposed Measures

Location	Key Deficiency	Proposed Measure
Whole Bekaa	Traffic guidance	Signage improvement
	Unstable surface conditions and alignments	Internat'l highway upgrade
	Unclear road network system	Systematic numbering
Niha	Poor road access from International highway	Niha access road
	Poor traffic control in community	Niha site management
	Insufficient connection to upper archeological site	Niha site management
	Discharge of untreated wastewater	Niha site management
Zahle	Poor traffic patterns in old neighborhoods	Zahle site management
	Traffic jam in city center	Zahle site management
	Shortage of pedestrian attractiveness	Zahle site management
	Garbage dumped in Berdawni River	Cleaning campaign
Baalbek	Weak urban linkage between the city and site	Thematic trails
Aanjar	Garbage on archeological sites	Aanjar site management

Source: JICA Study Team

3.3.2 Facilities

This section surveys tourism facilities such as lodging, dining, cultural, entertainment, resort, commercial, park, and other facilities for visitors, that are provided in this area. The survey looks at four areas: (1) Baalbek, (2) Zahle, (3) Niha, and (4) Aanjar. Existing conditions of the tourism facilities are described by area. Then, key deficiencies on the tourism facilities are identified, and required solutions (programs or policies) are suggested.

(1) Baalbek

a) Existing Conditions

Baalbek is a major tourism site that attracts a lot of tourists. Moreover, as the city is the administrative center of qaza (see Figure 3.3.3), it has the potential as a town for the tourists to visit other sites scattered through out the region. The city, however, lacks sufficient tourism facilities. Facilities registered with MOT are listed in Annex 3.

i) Lodging

The Palmyra Hotel provides 34 rooms, which is the most significant hotel stock in Baalbek. The Shuman Hotel has been mentioned, but the team members have not been able to locate it. There are also four pensions and one of the churches provides 3-4 rooms.

Figure 3.3.2 Interior of Palmyra Hotel



Source: JICA Study Team

ii) Museums and visitors centers

Current facilities include the Qala'a's site museum, which was recently created by DGA in concert with the German Archaeological Institute (GTZ). It features an effective Figure on the site's archaeology and the area's local culture with photos by 19th C.

photographer, Hermann Burchardt. There is an existing ticket booth, and the CHUD project proposes a visitors center at the entrance to the Qala'a in an existing building. Other site facilities include toilets, which are quite clean. There are no benches for visitors, so they sit on the antiquities. No museums are available within the downtown or rural areas. Ras Baalbek features a Byzantine ruin and a Byzantine church within a contemporary church complex that houses a small museum.

iii) Restaurants/Cafes

There are dozens of restaurants in Baalbek. However, only a handful of them provide the type of food and environment that tourists would demand. The Study Team did not observe any restaurants north of Baalbek, although there are probably a few.

iv) Shopping

There is an exceptional handicraft shop across from the Palmyra Hotel and a few others nearby, but there are few within the downtown itself. Many of the handicrafts are well designed but the prices for the abayas are high due to the amount of labor involved (\$500 +/-). Unfortunately, handicraft NGOs indicate that the Gulf market for abayas is dwindling. Handicraft artisans should provide a broad spectrum of products to meet demand. Handicraft vendor tents (attractive white canvas) are set up for the festival. A more organized vendor area should be created to draw tourists and facilitate increased sales opportunities for local people. The city is renovating its souk area which would be a good place for the handicrafters. Souvenir vendors are not allowed on the site, but they are allowed to congregate at the exit. Handicrafts should be available in an organized area outside the site and in the medina to best capture visitor spending.

v) Entertainment

Although the summer festival is a great source of entertainment, festival equipment intrudes on the site during the summer months, and the scaffolding might be harming the antiquities by cracking the mortar. In addition to the festival and nearby dabke dancing and traditional music, the Ras al Ain promenade provides a refreshing area for strolling in the summer, as the walkway is wide with patterned paving and runs adjacent to the city park and cooling channel. Other than drinking, eating, and *hubbly-bubbly*, there is no other entertainment in the city. Traditional music and dance should also be provided in the park to draw tourists to the restaurants along the Ras Al Ain.

vi) Other facilities for visitors

There are no other major tourism facilities. There are no places providing information to visitors, and not many signs guiding tourists to attractions (archeological site, souk, taxis, police station, cash point, etc.).

b) Key Deficiencies

The following have been identified as key deficiencies.

- **Lodgings are lacking:** Although Baalbek has potential as a base town for the tourists to visit other sites in the region, its bed capacity is small.
- **Cultural facilities are lacking:** Baalbek is the administrative and cultural center of the qaza, but there are no museums portraying local culture, other than the one at

the archeological site.

- **Lack of tourism information and guidance:** There are no places providing information for tourists and not many signs guiding tourists to attractions. Such places are essential for the tourists wishing to get update information easily and quickly.
- **No pedestrian paths:** There is much traffic around the archeological site, and there is little space for pedestrians around the ruins. Also, the access between the archeological site and other tourism attractions such as souk is inconvenient for tourist on foot.

c) Required Solutions

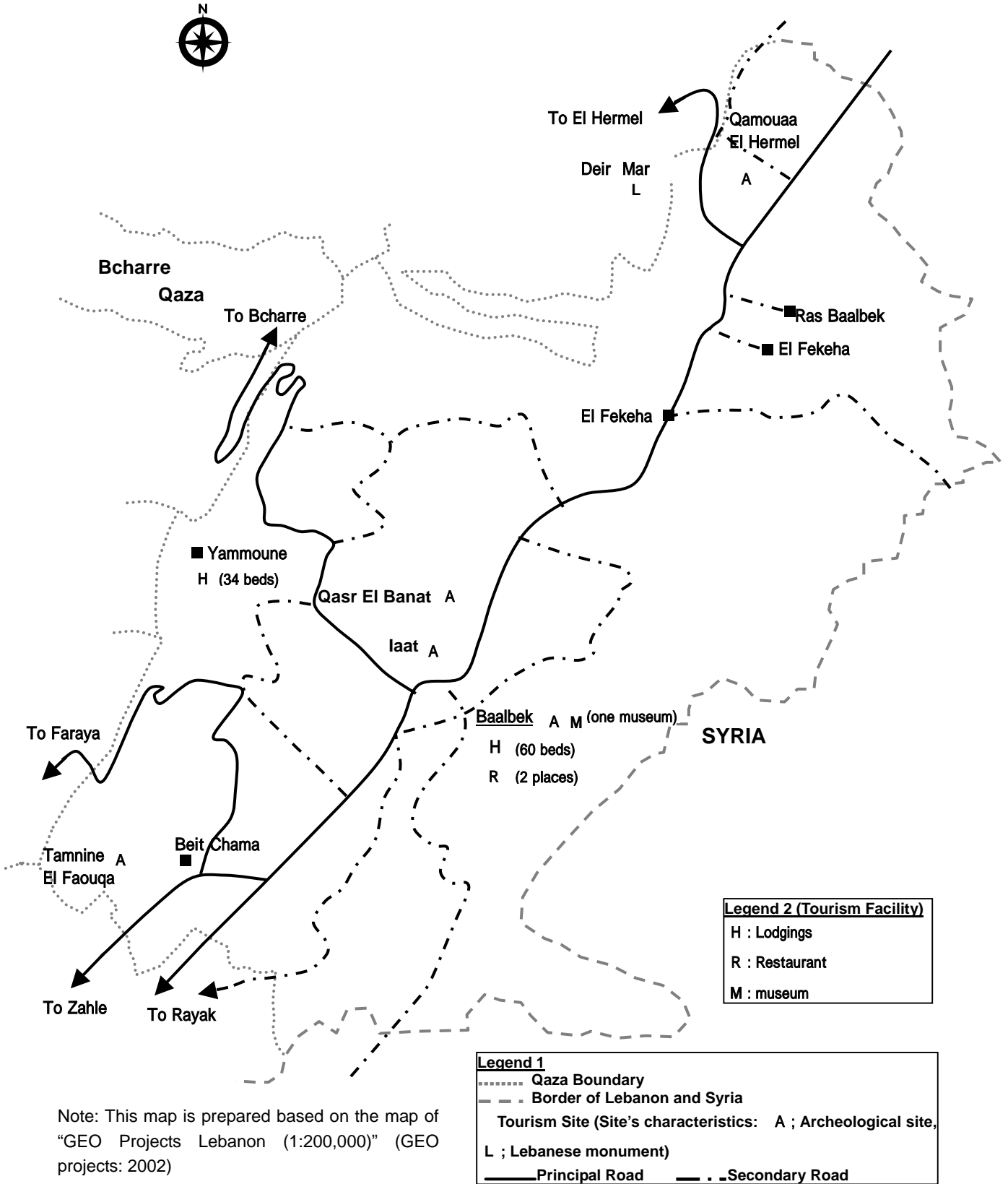
In order to solve the above-identified deficiencies, following actions (programs or policies) are suggested.

- **Establishing lodgings:** It is proposed that more types of lodging be established, particularly simple lodgings such as youth hostels.
- **Establishing local culture museum:** As there are no major cultural facilities except the archeological museum in this area or Qaza, it is proposed that such facility is provided. As Baalbek has the archeological museum and it is a center of local culture of this region, it is proposed to establish a local culture museum. Such a facility could contribute not only to satisfying tourists, but also to enable local residents to disseminate their own culture.
- **Establishing visitor information center:** It is suggested that tourism information facility is provided in a symbolic place attracting tourists such as major attraction points. The place is proposed to be developed as a pedestrian-oriented area.
- **Providing guiding signs:** International standard signs should be provided in the town in order to guide tourists to tourism attractions smoothly.

Photo 3.3.1
Ras al Ain in Baalbek



Figure 3.3.3 Map of Tourism Sites of Baalbek Qaza



(2) Zahle

a) Existing Conditions

Zahle has the most tourism facilities of all the tourism sites in the region. Facilities registered with MOT are listed in Annex 3.

i) Lodging

Before the War, Zahle had a total of 25 hotels. There are 11 hotels and other accommodations registered with MOT with the total bed capacity at 354. Three popular hotels are the 4 star Grand Hotel Kadri, where most of the Baalbek performers stay, the Monte Alberto located on the hills above the Berdawni restaurant area, and Massabki Hotel. The Akl and the Traboulsi pensions offer inexpensive rooms along the river in the tourism zone. A new hotel is opening in Aanjar, and a 4 star hotel, the Chtaura Park, also exists in nearby Chtaura.

ii) Museums and visitors centers

Currently, there are no museums or visitors centers of which found in Zahle, Niha, or Aanjar. However, there is a strong need to insert both facilities in Zahle's downtown revitalization plan, and the municipality's plan calls for a cultural center. There are a number of historic structures that could be adaptively reused as a Visitors Center with a Museum of Wine, Cuisine, and Poetry, reflecting both the city's and region's heritage. Both Aanjar and Niha have ticket booths at the entrances to the archaeological sites, which are staffed by DGA and the municipalities.

iii) Restaurants/Cafes/Vineyards/Festivals

Zahle is known as the city of excellent wine and cuisine, particularly mezze (Lebanese appetizers). There are numerous, good restaurants. Aanjar is famous for its fresh fish and Armenian food. A few good restaurants have ponds surrounding the tables, where geese and trout flourish, plus a full array of dishes. Niha does not have any restaurants or cafes. Nearby vineyards include Ksara and Kefraya. Also nearby is Tanaïl, a Jesuit farm that grows fruits, grapes (vineyards) and dairy products. The farm is also a teaching facility for St. Joseph University. Both Zahle and Niha have annual festivals.

iv) Shopping

Zahle is a primary shopping center in terms of fashion. It also has two attractive handicraft shops in the center of the downtown and a contemporary jeweler. The Study Team has not identified any tourist shopping in Niha.

In Aanjar, there is one shop that sells antiques and gifts at the entrance to the archaeological site, and there is a factory that makes brass souvenirs and gifts, in addition to many gold making artisans and factories.

v) Entertainment

There are a number of cafes, nightclubs, and coffee shops in Zahle. There are none in Niha. In Aanjar, many local people and their children entertain themselves in the summer at the local playgrounds.

vi) Other facilities for visitors

There are no other major tourism facilities. There are no places providing information to visitors, and not many signs guiding to tourist attractions (scenic riverside restaurants, post office, taxi pool, police station, cash point, etc.).

b) Key Deficiencies

The following have been identified as key deficiencies.

- **No major cultural facility:** Zahle is a major town of this region including Baalbek Qaza, but cultural facilities are not provided.
- **Lack of tourist information:** There are no places providing information to visitors and not many signs guiding to tourist attractions. Such places are essential facility for the tourists wishing to get update information easily and quickly.

c) Required Solutions

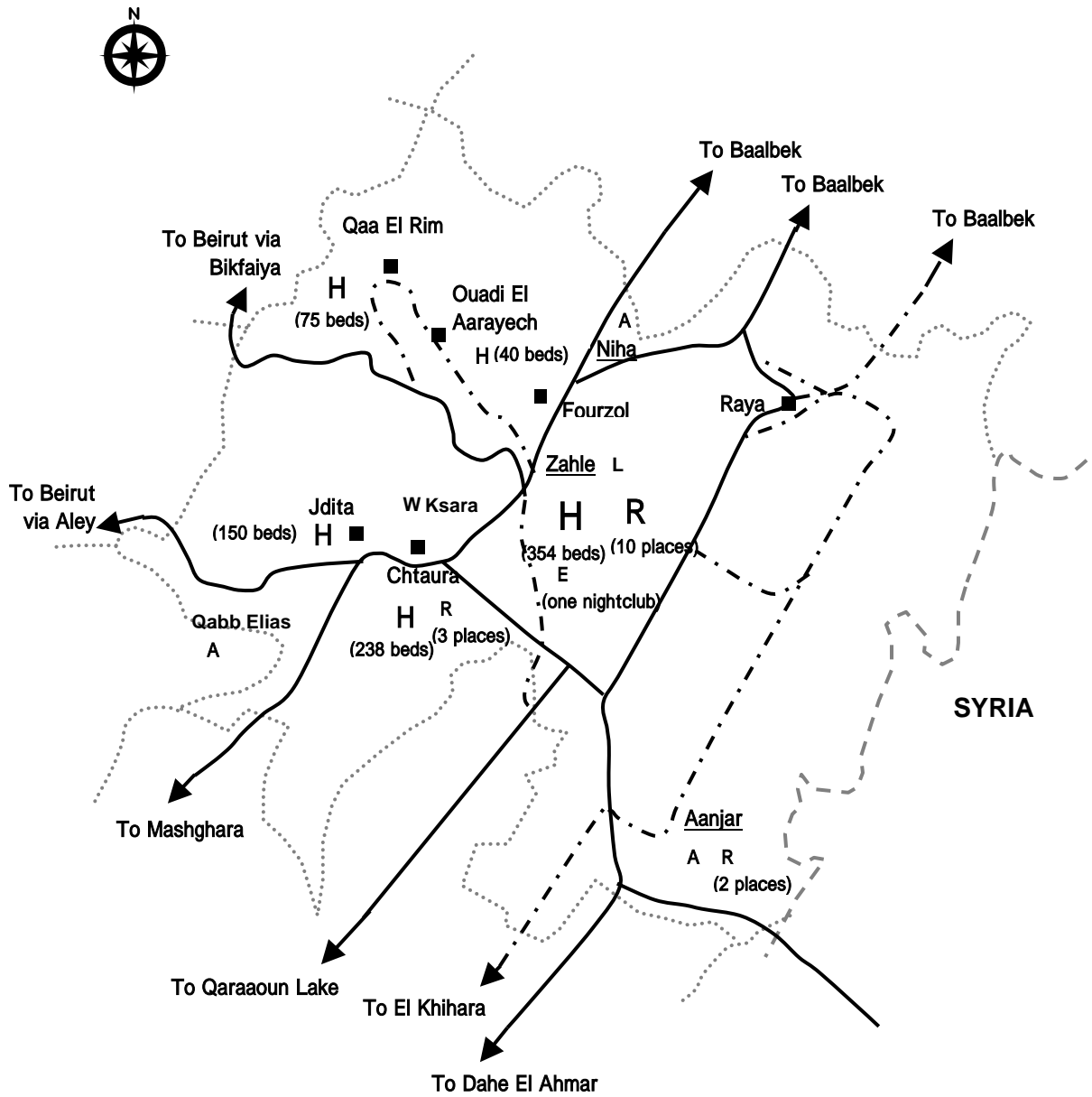
In order to solve the above-identified deficiencies, following actions (programs or policies) are suggested:

- **Establishing local culture museum,**
- **Establishing visitor information center,** and
- **Providing guiding signs.**

Photo 3.3.2
Zahle Heritage Buildings



Figure 3.3.4 Map of Tourism Sites of Zahle Qaza



Legend 1	
.....	Qaza Boundary
- - -	Border of Lebanon and Syria
Tourism Site (Site's characteristics: A ; Archeological site, W ; Winery)	
————	Principal Road
- - - -	Secondary Road

Legend 2 (Tourism Facility)	
H	: Lodgings
R	: Restaurant
E	: Entertainment

Note: This map is prepared based on the map of "GEO Projects Lebanon (1:200,000)" (GEO projects: 2002)

Source: JICA Study Team

(3) Niha

a) Existing Conditions

Niha is a small village, and its major tourism attractions are two archeological structures separated by only a few minutes walk distance. Therefore, there are very few tourism facilities in this village or in the archeological site.

Another archeological site is located at 20 minutes walk distance from the major site mentioned above, but it does not have strong potential as a tourism attraction in the current conditions, because structures of the site are left collapsed. Neither walls nor roofs can be seen. In addition, there are no tourism attractions along the 20 minutes walk footpath, while the view from the footpath is panoramic. No lodgings, dining, cultural, and other tourist facilities in Niha.

There are no places providing information to visitors, and not many signs guiding to tourist attraction in the village.

b) Key Deficiencies

The following have been identified as key deficiencies.

- **Total lack of tourism facilities**

c) Required Solutions

In order to solve the above-identified deficiencies, following actions (programs or policies) are suggested.

- **Establishing a complex facility:** Judging from the current scale of village and tourism attractions, it may not be necessary to establish many tourism facilities. Therefore, it is proposed to establish a common facility which functions as a café, souvenir shop, museum, and a visitor center.
- **Developing the footpath:** Currently, Niha has substantially only one archeological site. In order to promote this site more, it is suggested to develop other tourism resources in this site. As the footpath from the major site to another site has potential to attract tourists by panoramic view, it is suggested that some measures are taken to lead tourists to the footpath by developing some tourism attractions along the footpath.

(4) Aanjar

a) Existing Conditions

Aanjar is a small town, but its scale of the archeological site is large. The town area is generally divided into three areas: archeological, restaurants, and residential areas. It takes a few minutes by car to move between the areas. The archeological site has a very strong attraction and the restaurants area has well-conditioned restaurants. There are few tourism facilities in the residential area.

There exist no overnight accommodation in Aanjar, and a hotel is under construction. There are two restaurants, which are registered by MOT (Annex 3). These restaurants cater particularly for tourists. They are located at small riverside, offering peaceful atmosphere, and have capacities for accommodating group tourists. As there is a trout farm in this area, the restaurants are famous for trout menu.

The archeological site has a very strong attraction, but there are no facilities exhibiting any items excavated in the site. In the archeological site two simple facilities (café and souvenir shop) are provided at the ticket booth, and their structures are simple. In the residential area, there is a small factory/ shop of local food product, established under the technical support of other donor agency, but there are no major facilities except this shop, selling souvenirs or other items that tourists need. There are no shops in the restaurants area.

There are some signs guiding to archeological and restaurants areas along the nearest main road, but no signs guiding to residential area. There are no places providing information to visitors in any areas of this town.

b) Key Deficiencies

The following have been identified as key deficiencies.

- **Lack of cultural facilities**
- **Lack of tourism information and guidance**

c) Required Solutions

In order to solve the above-identified deficiencies, following actions (programs or policies) are suggested:

- **Establishing archeological and local culture museum,**
- **Establishing visitor information center, and**
- **Providing guiding signs.**

3.4 Demand

3.4.1 Current Patterns

An almost total lack of effort to collect substantive tourism data (visitor/guest register at hotels/tourist sites) make quantitative estimation of current demand volume extremely difficult. Based on limited and fragmentary data, the current demand patterns in the Baalbek and the Zahle areas are summarized as follows.

- The majority of tourists to the areas are day visitors of Lebanese/GCCs coming from Greater Beirut, and Syrians for shopping/business (and to a much lesser degree/ Jordanians).
- There are 2.9 million Syrian cross-border visitors (2001) according the WTO estimate². Syrian road visitors are presumably mainly for shopping/business in Beirut and Zahle as well. If 10% are assumed to visit Zahle for lunch on the journey to/from Beirut, 290,000 Syrian road visitors stop at Zahle or roughly 800 per day.
- WTO estimates 1.9 million Lebanese road visitors to Syria (Damascus). If 10% of them assumed to stop by in Zahle for lunch on the way to/from Damascus, 190,000 Lebanese day visitors to Zahle or 520 per day.
- The Grand Hotel Kadri is the largest property in Zahle with 105 rooms/210 beds (MOT Hotel Guide 2003). The annual average occupancy (AAO) based on hotel

² Source: WTO special report No. 23 for MENA (Middle East/North Africa) Seminar in Cairo, Sept. 2002.

data obtained through MOT is reported to be:

- ◇ 18.4% in 2001,
- ◇ 16.4% in 2002, and
- ◇ 17.8% in 2003 (with estimates for November -December)

The following are other specifics at the hotel.

- Average length of stay (ALS) at 1.1 night (90% for 1 night and 10% for 2 nights, 3/more nights negligible, based on guest register of the Hotel),
- 2003 guest arrivals at 5,049 persons (Nov./Dec. estimated),
- Guest segments (based on guest register of the Hotel):
 - ◇ All year round 80% Lebanese,
 - ◇ Peak months (July/Aug.) 50% foreign (Euro/GCC)
50% Lebanese
 - ◇ Peak month (Sept.) 70% foreign (Euro/GCC)
30% Lebanese
- The Palmyra Hotel, the only property in Baalbek listed in MOT's Hotel Guide, is of the size/quality to accommodate tour packages from the West with 35 rooms/60 beds (MOT Hotel Guide 2003).
- MOT site visitor records are summarized in Table 3.4.1.

Table 3.4.1 Visitors by Site

Site/Year	2000	2001	2002
Baalbek	88,369 (31.4%)	92,670 (4.9%)	77,594 (-16.3%)
Aanjar	32,721 (84.8%)	28,372 (-13.3%)	21,932 (-22.7%)
Niha	1,429 (-16.1%)	914 (-36.0)	883 (-3.4%)

Source: MOT

The majority of site visitors are from the West/developed economies (inclusive of Japan) with cultural interest. The visitor frequency is very low among GCC/Levantine. Also relatively low visitor frequency is observed among US, Canada, France, Germany, and Australia where many Lebanese Diaspora/dual passport holders are counted.

The demand analysis will continue through the subsequent stage of the Study, and projection of visitor volumes will be presented for areas of interest. It is apparent that stayover visitor volume is not high in part because of the easy driving proximity of the Valley to both metropolitan areas of Beirut and Damascus. The low occupancy percentages at the Grand Kadri Hotel also suggests low overnight business into the area.

3.4.2 Potentials

There is definite potential for several types or segments of tourism. Cultural tourists will continue to go to Baalbek, and can be enticed to extend their stays in the Valley provided that attractions are developed and marketed at the additional locations such as Aanjar, Zahle, Niha and the upper valley area.

General family groups and vacationers will be drawn in rising numbers to the pleasant

urban environments of the valley's key towns if they improve their cultural and entertainment facilities through museums, visitor centers and events and staged commemorations along appealing cultural or popular themes.

Eco-tourists and nature-based visitor groups, hikers and walkers are already visiting the upper valley sites for the Assi River and high altitude camping, and can be further drawn to the foothills villages and to eco-resorts and agro-tourism destinations like Niha could be.

The logistics of linking different parts of the valley to the Beirut and Damascus areas are improving so that the study areas hold promise broadly for these different types of tourism.

3.5 Socio-economic Setting

3.5.1 Communities

The JICA Study focuses on two of the five Qazas in the Bekaa Valley or Bekaa Governorate: the Qaza of Baalbek and the Qaza of Zahle. Many appealing characteristics and resources link the communities of the Bekaa. They include: agricultural landscapes of fruit orchards, vineyards, and grain; a strong built and living heritage including historical sites and monuments, dance, music, textile, and other handicrafts; and an ancient tradition of hospitality and cuisine.

Employment-wise, Zahle's food and beverage production is quite strong. Baalbek, a traditional culture, is based more on local agriculture and handcraft. The unemployment problem is more acute in Baalbek than in Zahle, particularly amongst women, but women and youth face underemployment throughout the Valley. Communities also face the out-migration of local talent and all residents compete for jobs with lower paid employees from outside Lebanon.

Baalbek has a dispersed group of handcraft training organizations and vendors who should be organized to become more effective. There are a number of NGOs and associations that dot both Qazas, but there is no network amongst them to better organize and promote tourism development. All local communities who were interviewed indicated an interest in better utilization and linkages of their resources and increased tourism development as a tool for job creation and poverty alleviation.

3.5.2 The Regional Socio-economy - Baalbek Qaza

People began settling in Baalbek in the Early Bronze Age (2900-2300 BC). Later settlers included Phoenicians, Seleucids, Romans, Byzantines, Islamic Period Arabs, and Ottomans. During the Roman period, the city flourished. Today's population is hospitable, and it is characterized by strong tribal and family traditions. More than 96% are Lebanese nationality.

The Bekaa Governorate consists of the Qazas of Baalbek, Hermel, Zahle, Bekaa West, and Rashaya. Data provided by the General Directorate of Statistics indicates that the Bekaa Governorate contained 512,293 people in 1997. The Qaza of Baalbek, which is

the largest in the governorate, had 225,000 inhabitants. The Qaza is both rural and urbanized, and there are approximately 100 settlements.

Within the Qaza, the Study focuses on the city of Baalbek and settlements to the north. At this stage, the JICA Study Team is exploring village linkages to eco- and rural tourism, including perhaps Ras Baalbek, Qaa, and other villages, which have interesting rural and cultural heritages, and are located en route from Baalbek to Hermel. (Qaza Hermel and Qaa lie directly east of Tripoli, and Qaa is just south of the Syrian border.)

Baalbek is the primary services, administrative, and educational centre for the Qaza. It is centered between the Assi River to the north (into Hermel) and the Litani River to the south. Historically, Baalbek provided a safe water supply away from the city-states and their rivalries on the Mediterranean coast, and it linked Palmyra and Homs in Syria to Beirut, and Tripoli to Damascus.

From 1975 to 1990, Baalbek city experienced significant urban growth, and the current population is estimated at approximately 60,000 people, with another 38,000 people living in surrounding villages. This figure does not include approximately 30,000 refugees. (The latest census was taken in 1932 when the population was 16,445. The population was estimated at only 17,658 nearly 40 years later in 1970.). The average household size is 5.67 persons.

Only 13% of the city's population have secondary education, about 6% university education, and about 2% vocational training. Women total about 15% of the labor force, while 57% of the males are employed. Employment by sector is as follows: 33% commerce and construction, 29% government and community health and education, 27% financial, transportation, and communication services (which might include some tourism related services), and about 10% agriculture. Only 1.2% are employed in direct tourism services (hotels and restaurants). Lack of employment opportunities, low female employment rates, and low income levels characterize the city, and the gap appears to be widening between the advantaged and the disadvantaged.

Currently, nearly 40% of Baalbek's population falls within the 5-19 age group. This provides a large resource base for the tourism sector. Within the coming decade, a major effort should be made to train these young people in hospitality services, guides for specialty archaeological and eco-/nature based and rural tourism, handicrafts, etc.

Some NGOs in Baalbek are characterized by political associations, although there are others including the University Graduates Association (UGA), which focus on preservation of the cultural heritage, the Women's Club to Develop the New Generation and the Muslim Girl Scouts, and a number of handicraft NGOs, including CREADEL, all of which focus on human resource development.

3.5.3 The Regional Socio-economy - Zahle Qaza

(1) Population

The present population in the Qaza of Zahle is reported to be about 130,000, larger than the registered inhabitants of 116,442, the largest of all the Qazas in the Bekaa valley.

This reflects the relatively active economy of the area in the inland of the country, where out migration is a common phenomenon. The ratio of working age population to the total population or the labor force coefficient is 63.5 %, slightly lower than the national average of 65.4 % as of 1996 (UNDP/MSA). The population density of the Qaza is more or less 200 per km². Most population is urban, living mainly in the municipality of Zahle with the land area of 95 km², one of the largest in the country.

People in Zahle are active in various private businesses. Through its history of communications with many visitors and traders, communities are quite open and multi-cultural nature has been strengthened. They also maintain strong ties with those who have migrated from Zahle.

Aanjar

The total population of the Aanjar municipality is reported to be about 5,000, decreased from over 7,000 before the war (municipal office). Some 25 % of the registered inhabitants have emigrated. The unemployment rate is reported to be 15 %. The community of Aanjar which has a strong Armenian heritage is well organized as manifested by organized efforts to improve the access to the town and its central facilities.

Niha

The total population of the Niha municipality is reported to be 1,800 with 300 households at the average household size of 6 per family (municipal office). This is much smaller than the registered inhabitants of 3,000. The total labor force is about 600, dominated by men. According to the survey, 40 % were unemployed, but the municipality indicated in the focus group that the actual number is very low as most people commute to Zahle.

(2) Economy

In terms of land use, the Qaza of Zahle, sitting on the central part of the Bekaa valley, is a dominantly agricultural area, but in terms of employment, the agricultural sector accounts for 10.1% of the total employment. There exist 24 active agricultural cooperatives in the Qaza. Seven of them are specifically oriented to livestock production and marketing, particularly of cattle. Other activities promoted by specific cooperatives include production of grapes, other fruits, potatoes, sugar beet and flowers, production and distribution of eggs, fish culture, sericulture, and beekeeping. There exist seven general agricultural cooperatives specific to localities. The total number of members of all the cooperatives is 1,905 or about one-quarter of the agricultural workers.

There exist 324 enterprises in the Qaza of Zahle, of which 247 (76.2 %) are small employing 3-4 workers. The largest enterprise is a paper mill located in the upstream of the Berdawni River producing tissue paper and other products with the employment of some 500 workers. The industrial sector is fairly diversified in the Qaza, led by food and beverages accounting for 31.5% of the total number of enterprises, followed by manufacturing of furniture (12.6 %), clothing and leather tanning (11.2 %), and metal products (11.4 %). There exist 21 dairy plants in the Qaza. Larger establishments in the food and beverages subsectors include several wineries. Details are given in Table

3.5.1.

Table 3.5.1 Distribution of Industrial Establishments by Subsector and by Size

Subsector	No. of establishments			
	3-4 workers	5-10 workers	11 or more workers	Total
Footer and leather goods	2	1	1	4
Machinery and industrial equipment	12	4	1	17
Machinery and electrical equipment	4			4
Construction	4			4
Wood and wood products	8			8
Cars and car accessories	4			4
Basic metals	3		1	4
Metal products, except machinery and equipment	33	1	3	37
Furniture	33	6	2	41
Clothing, leather tannery an furs	35		1	36
Mining and quarrying	1	1		2
Food and beverages	68	8	26	102
Chemical products	4			4
Rubber and plastic products	9	1	4	14
Non metallic mineral products	9	6	3	18
Textile	8	1	1	10
Printing, typing and production of recorded media	6	2		8
Paper and paper products	3	1	1	5
Agricultural services		1		1
Optical/medical equipment and watches	1			1
Total	247	33	44	324

Source: Ministry of Industry, Industrialists in Lebanon, Bcharre 1998

There are also 431 artisan workers, mostly women (85.6 %), engaging in handicrafts and preserved food production throughout the Qaza. They are distributed in the city of Zahle (69), Saadnayel (34), Ain Kfar Zabad (32), Majdel Aanjar (28), and 29 other villages. Most of them work in textiles (65.2 %), followed by pottery and ceramics (9.5 %), food products (6.7 %), and wood and mosaics (4.6 %). 32 % of all female workers are employed in scientific, medical, educational fields.

Of the total Qaza employment, 16.7 % were in mining and quarrying, manufacturing and utilities, and additional 10.0 % in construction. This leaves 63.2 % as the share of services employment. The services sector employs 80.8 % of female and 59.4% of male employment.

Rooted deeply in its history, Zahle is considered the cultural and education center of Bekaa. A few education institutes are located in the city of Zahle, including university branches and the Educational Center for Research and Development. Three agricultural research centers are also located. Four hospitals exist in the city, including the best hospital for heart surgery and treatment.

The city is known for shopping opportunities, including some high end ones. The city has five main commercial centers and over 10 large restaurants that can cater several thousand meals at one same time. Zahle is known also for its culinary culture represented by Lebanese food (mezze), various food preserves, and wine and arak.

Aanjar

Situated in the middle of most fertile land of Bekaa, various fruits and vegetables are produced in Aanjar to support its economy. Some fruits face difficulty in marketing due to low prices and over production. As part of crop diversification efforts, pistachio has been successfully introduced recently to produce good quality nuts comparable to products in the North. An agricultural cooperative once existed but was closed due to the war.

Manufacturing of fruit jams and dried fruits is undertaken by women. Recently, a small factory of agro-products (Akhtamar) was established by the local Red Cross supported by apart from the Canadian government (\$ US 25,000). With 10 women and manager employed, the production is increasing and marketing in Beirut has started. As part of Armenian cultural heritage, specialty food products are produced for marketing such as pastrami, beef sausage and fermented goat cheese. Also there is a factory manufacturing brass souvenirs and other gifts. A German company once planned to produce various apple products, but the plan did not materialize.

Aanjar was visited by 36,000 tourists in 1999, 32,700 tourists in 2000, 30,000 tourists in 2001, and 22,000 tourists in 2002, according to the municipality. No tourist stays overnight in Aanjar as there was no hotel in the town. A new hotel is being built near the Nabaa Aanjar road and will open in 2004. Most Arab and Lebanese tourists visit Aanjar during summer, while other foreign tourists come throughout the four seasons.

Niha

The economy of Niha relies heavily on grapes production (mainly table grapes), and there is manufacturing of wine and arak for local consumption. Other fruits produced in Niha include apples, cherries and almonds. Due to over production and low prices, particularly of grapes, many farmers stopped working and harvesting. The number of arak producers (not commercialized) has been reduced from 14 to only three. Niha at present does not produce any handicraft, and farmers do not raise livestock. There is a manufacturer of plastic products.

Niha is visited by 1,500-2,000 tourists every year, according to the municipality. Foreign tourists concentrate in spring and summer, while in autumn and winter local tourists are dominant. A tourism committee exists with eight members, but is active only for the annual festival program. There exist no accommodations, restaurant or shops for tourists.

(3) Unemployment and income levels

The unemployment rate in the Qaza of Zahle is reported to be 5.7%, substantially lower than the national average of 7.3% (UNDP/MSA). The male unemployment rate is

slightly higher at 6.4 %, while the female rate is 4.4 %. The unemployment rate among the youth is said to be much higher.

Zahle ranks 21st of 26 Qazas in Lebanon in terms of the share of low income households. According to UNDP, 29.7 % of households in Zahle are classified as low income households, the sixth lowest.

3.6 Voice of the Stakeholders

3.6.1 Baalbek City

The city of Baalbek has significant Roman ruins at the Qala'a or World Heritage site of temples. However, the site does not contribute enough to the local economy. Baalbek has many attractions other than the Qala'a and other archaeological sites including restaurants, food shops, coffee shops with hubble bubble, historic buildings, and mosques.

A group interview was conducted by the JICA Study Team with about 20 participants on October 11, 2003, to discuss strategies and project ideas for tourism development. This was in follow-up to an earlier focus group on August 27 and a meeting with the municipality's Tourism Development Committee representative on September 19. The overall result was that the majority of the population felt that the local economy was depressed and needed tourism development to produce better job opportunities and improve living conditions.

As an implementing body, the Municipality of Baalbek with its Tourism Development Committee is the most important stakeholder. The Ministry of Social Affairs and a number of NGOs and private shops, such as Asyla, are involved in handicraft development, including CREADEL. Private sector businesses (pensions, restaurants) and non-profit associations are active in tourism activities including the Muslim Girl Scout Association, the Lebanese Association for Studies and Training, the Association to Safeguard the Environment and Heritage, the University Graduates Association, and the Tourist Guides Union.

The focus group participants indicated that the major tourism development strategy should be to link the World Heritage site to other historic sites in the city, such as the Mercury Temple, and to the medina/Ras al Ain local businesses to improve visitor length of stay and spending patterns to encourage the local economy. Handicraft and folklore were seen as having great potential as tourism attractions.

Participants were asked to narrow down their list of strategies to the three most important. They recommended human resource development, a master plan for tourism, and an investment plan. Under human resource development, many participants recognized the shortage of skilled workers, and they indicated a need for training in hospitality, hygiene (food and beverages), marketing, festival art sets, handicraft design and production, guiding, and site preservation.

Under a master plan for tourism, participants discussed linking the Qala'a to Ras al Ain

and the Temple of Mercury, and many of the objectives of the CDR/World Bank funded Cultural Heritage Urban Development (CHUD) project and related master planning by the municipality, to coordinate infrastructure and facilities. They also recommended having a tourism office at the municipality. With regard to investment, one recommendation was to create a rest house, heritage hotels, or a large scale tourism resort, which would have a big impact on limited segments of the community. Other project recommendations included industrial development, renovation of a local cave, publishing a city map with attractions, and creating design guidelines to give the city a cohesive appearance.

The last group discussions were held on January 16, 2004 to discuss specific proposals presented by the Study Team and issues for implementation. The results are summarized in Table 2.3.1.

Photo 3.6.1
Third Group Interview
in Baalbek
on 16 January, 2004



3.6.2 North Bekaa Valley

Interviews were held on September 19 with local stakeholders in Ras Baalbek, Fekeha, and Qaa. Earlier interviews and site visits were completed in August. A more formal focus group was held on January 17, 2004. Results indicate that there are local stakeholders who are very interested in preserving their local heritage and promoting it as a way of drawing tourists to the northern part of the Bekaa (Table 2.3.1).

3.6.3 Zahle

Zahle is one of the largest cities in the Bekaa Valley, and it provides diverse tourism amenities including hotels, restaurants, and shops. With its dramatic setting nestled in a steep sided valley cut by the Berdawni River, the city is attractive, with a cozy urban atmosphere. Although it is well located and has a competitive advantage amongst cities in the Bekaa, tourists spend much more time in Beirut and Damascus. Zahle is populated with business oriented residents and has a capable and active Municipal President who are able to implement projects with limited assistance from the national government and international donors. The President is working on a re-development plan for the central area of the city, called the Berdawni Tourism Development Project. In addition to the municipality, local stakeholders include two strong cultural awareness

NGOs, an environmental club (caving), three universities (Lebanese American, Kaslik, and Science and Technology).

Resources available for further tourism development are gastronomy, wine/vineyards (about 12 not far from Zahle including Ksara at the edge of the city), a culture of art and poetry, heritage buildings, and strong businesses.

The JICA Study Team organized a focus group at the Zahle Municipality on 18th October, 2003, with about 30 participants. The purpose was to identify objectives and strategies for tourism development and related tourism project ideas. This was in follow-up to an earlier focus group on August 11, 2003, and NGO interviews on September 18, 2003. The primary strategy that evolved was support for development of cultural heritage tourism, including food (mezze is famous in Zahle), wine, arak, art, sculpture, poetry, historical buildings, and religion. The idea of establishing thematic routes through the Bekaa to connect attractions and draw increased visitation, including wine and gastronomy, eco-tourism and heritage, was also well accepted. Participants were also environmentally aware and interested in the attractiveness of the city including the clean-up of the Berdawni River and historic preservation for adaptive reuse. Project ideas included awareness raising through environmental and “hire locally” campaigns, agro products, cultural center, visitors center, heritage museum, handicrafts center, football (soccer) stadium, shopping mall, university lecture hall, sculpture area, and poet’s library. The “Tile Market” project was mentioned as an old idea that has yet to be implemented.

Concerning implementation and promotion, the participants discussed Zahle’s large overseas diaspora of former residents, who offer a strong potential as tourists and/or investors. The municipality and the NGOs are well organized to implement projects. The results of the last group discussions held on January 15, 2004 are summarized in Table 2.3.1.

Photo 3.6.2
Second Group Interview
in Zahle
on 18 October, 2003



3.6.4 Niha

Niha is a small community of less than 2000 people in the Bekaa Valley at the bottom of

Mount Lebanon that bases its economy on agriculture. Apart from the annual festival, which draws more than 1000 people over a period of four days, approximately 1400 visitors were recorded in 2000 as visitors to the Roman temples lower site. The number was reduced last year to 883 visitors, although record-keeping of visits is somewhat informal and there is no site management at the upper site. Many were cultural tourists (including expatriates from Beirut), academia, Lebanese families, and youth groups.

Niha offers very limited employment opportunities. Other than the archaeological site and agriculture, particularly table grapes and fruit orchards, Niha has a plastics factory (Panda plastic chairs) and an arak distillery. The major stakeholders who represent the local people are the municipality and its president and two churches. Community members who participated in the focus group included retired people, architects, teachers, engineers, librarian, doctors, nutritionist, farmers, university students, and Ministry of Social Affairs representatives.

The JICA Study Team held a focus group on 17th October, 2003, to discuss strategies and project ideas for tourism development in the village. Although participants admitted that existing resources were limited, they were very positive about their sense of community and place and the potential for increased tourism through regional networking with other areas in the Bekaa, Beirut, and Damascus.

Participants were interested in having a master plan for tourism development and they suggested a broad array of strategies and projects including sports tourism (sports village with courts for local youth), industrial tourism (water factory), agro tourism (food processing center and thematic wine route), spas and resorts, leisure tourism (renting local houses and a luna park), lodging, nature based tourism (hiking), and cultural tourism (archaeological excavations and preservation, sound and light show at the site, sculpture, painting). They felt they needed a tourism office to better promote Niha, and they were also supportive of training (guides). With regard to infrastructure, they felt that roads needed to be improved for better tourist access, and that sewage treatment should be put in place (lines reach the church and stop). Participants agreed that the ideas would need detailed study prior to implementation.

The last group of discussions were held on January 16, 2004 to discuss the more specific proposals presented by the Study team and issues for implementation. The results are summarized in Table 2.3.1.

3.6.5 Aanjar

Aanjar is an homogenous community with a dominant majority of ethnic Armenians. During the French Mandate Period, local residents ancestors were relocated in Aanjar. The city of less than 10,000 residents is run by a President (mayor) with a committee for tourism development. The community is agriculturally based, with a very small retail downtown and a larger retail section along the Damascus Highway outside the city entrance gate. In addition to the World Heritage Umayyad site at the outskirts of the medina, there are a number of good restaurants located in three different areas of the city (one facing the Aanjar Spring and two areas closer in).

Unfortunately, although the archaeological site and the restaurants are not far apart (approximately 1 kilometer), tour operators normally bring tourists to the site and then depart Aanjar without spending time or money in the village. The municipality has completed water and sewage lines in the village, and are now ready to begin tourism development. A 3 star hotel is being built by a local investor. The municipality has plans to clean up the Umayyad site to better present it to visitors, and they have located a piece of land behind the church and requested funding to develop an Armenian Museum.

The JICA Study Team held a focus group on 14th October, which was in follow-up to an earlier focus group interview on September 5th and a meeting with the municipality and its tourism development committee on September 17th. Participants on October 14th, which numbered twelve, generally agreed on the following strategy for tourism development in Aanjar:

- Encourage visitors to spend more time in Aanjar,
- Promote local Armenian culture,
- Create a site management strategy for the Umayyad site including preservation and interpretation and do additional excavations to enlarge the site,
- Create reasons for tourists to stay in the town,
- Work with tour operators so that they bring visitors to the town,
- Develop festivals and expositions, and
- Promote eco-tourism.

Participants also supported the following project ideas:

- Creation of a souk in the restaurant area with handicrafts, art and gold workshops, and a farmers market to attract tourists,
- Expand the existing Akhtamar facility to increase the job base and provide an outlet for agricultural products,
- Create a campsite and water park near the spring (limited support),
- Develop a music festival in the ruins and a jewelry festival,
- Develop a formal tourism committee to organize and promote tourism, and
- Organize a playground for children (family tourism).

All of stakeholders recommendations and comments are carefully noted and analyzed by the JICA Study Team in formulating the regional master plans. The results of the last group discussions held on January 15, 2004 are summarized in Table 2.3.1.