

# A Road Map Towards a Socioeconomic Development Plan for the Union of Municipalities of Iqlim El-Tuffah Nabatiyeh Governorate

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الجمهورية اللبنانية  
وزارة الشؤون الاجتماعية

In partnership with the  
Ministry of Social Affairs



Funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation



# A Road Map Towards a Socioeconomic Development Plan for the Union of Municipalities of Iqlim El-Tuffah Nabatiyeh Governorate

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## Credits and acknowledgements

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

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

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## Foreword by the Ministry of Social Affairs

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

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

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

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

**Dr. Hector Al-Hajjar**  
Minister of Social Affairs

## Foreword by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Ms. Alessandra Piermattei**  
Head of Office AICS Beirut

## Foreword by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme in Lebanon

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

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

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

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

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

**Taina Christiansen**  
Head of UN-Habitat Lebanon Country Programme

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

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

## Executive summary

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

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

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

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

## Project overview

### Project objectives

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

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

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

### Beneficiaries

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

## Methodology

The aim of the series of booklets produced for the 10 targeted UoMs, which this booklet is a part of, is to analyse the local conditions of these unions and study the sectors and services that are essential components within them. These booklets provide a practical framework for taking future steps towards achieving sustainable and balanced development. Thus, the booklet series is the compilation of data and analysis about needs, gaps and challenges identified by the UoMs and other relevant local stakeholders, as well as recommendations that they have outlined to inform strategic socioeconomic development directions for their respective unions. Therefore, the booklets can serve as tools for decision-makers at both the local and national levels, as well as for development agencies to build upon when preparing their national and local programmes and policies. They were hence developed as part of the system-strengthening process of the project for UoMs to start the journey of enhancing their local socioeconomic development planning. The booklets do not intend to present full-

### Expected outcomes

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

### Timeframe

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

### Geographical coverage

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

fledged strategic socioeconomic action plans; rather they outline the foundational elements and entry points upon which it is hoped that relevant stakeholders can continue building upon to support in future local socioeconomic development action planning efforts.

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

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

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

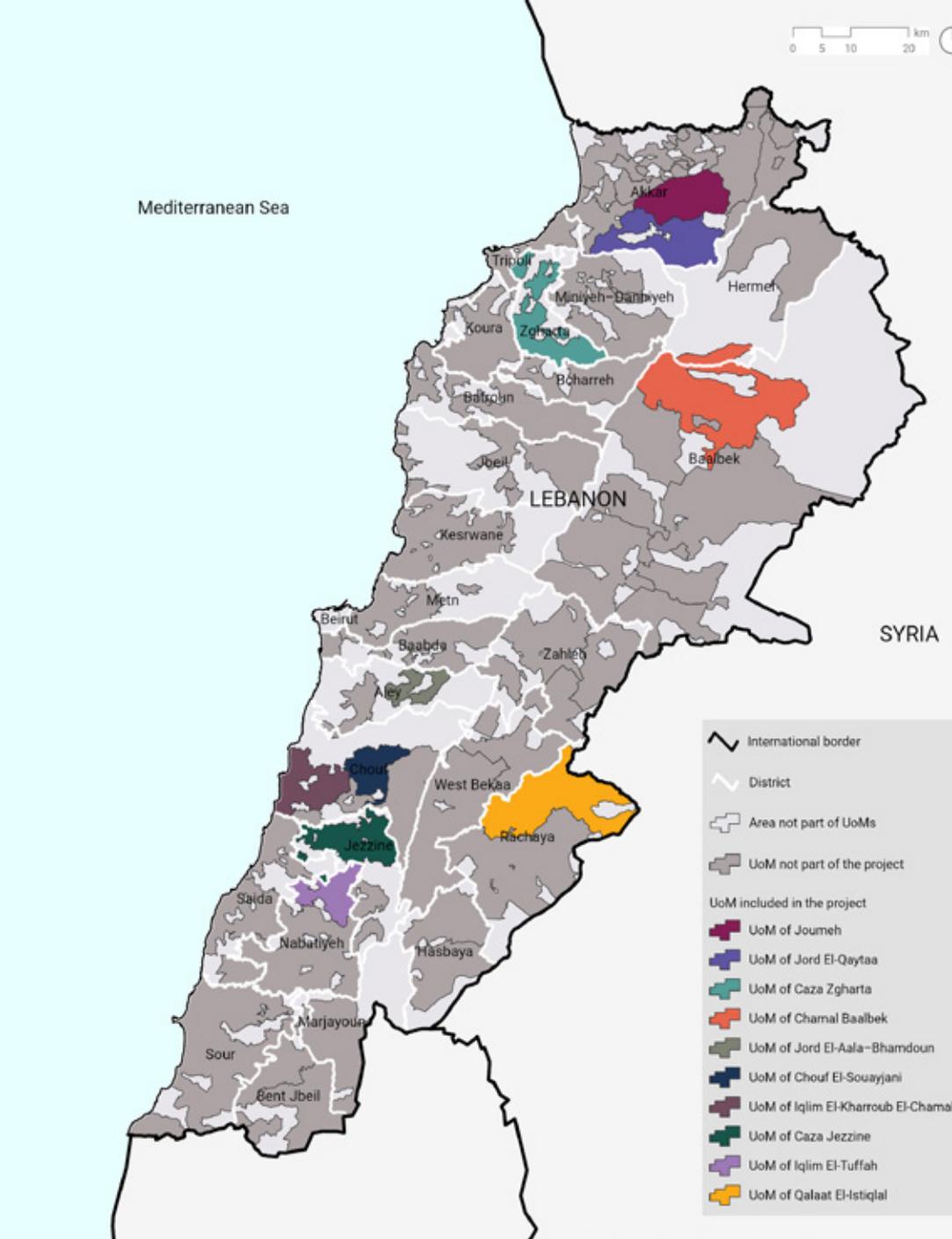
**Selection of UoMs**

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

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

**Table 1.** 10 UoMs selected under this project.

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



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

## Preparation and training

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



<sup>3</sup> Representing each of the seven governorates covered by the project.

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

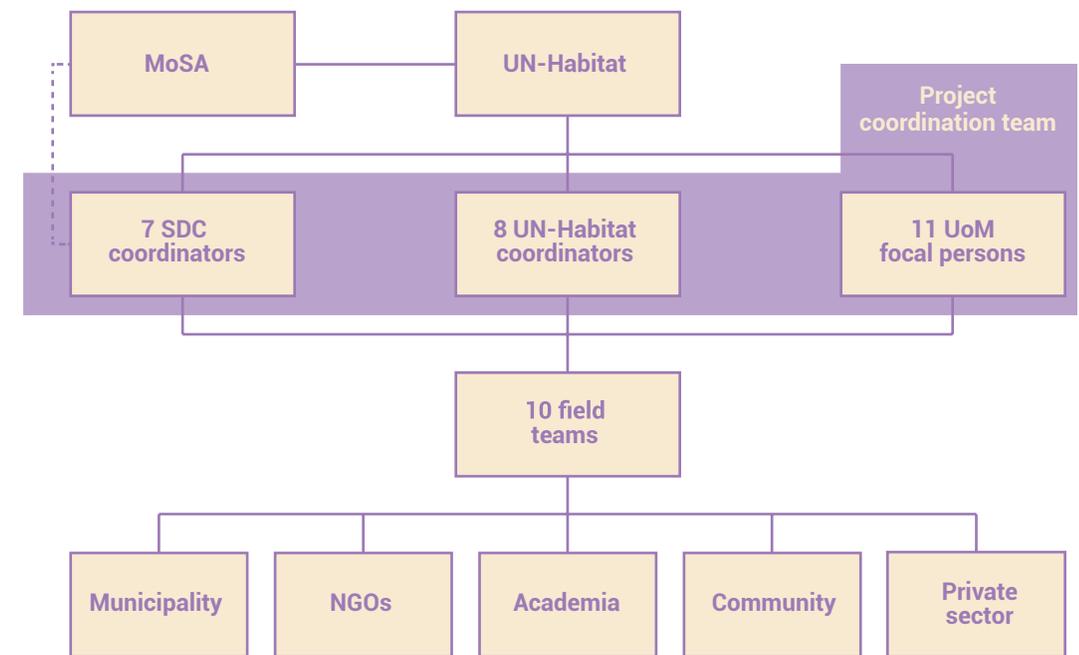


Figure 2. Stakeholders involved in the development of booklets as part of the project.

## Data collection, analysis, and validation

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

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

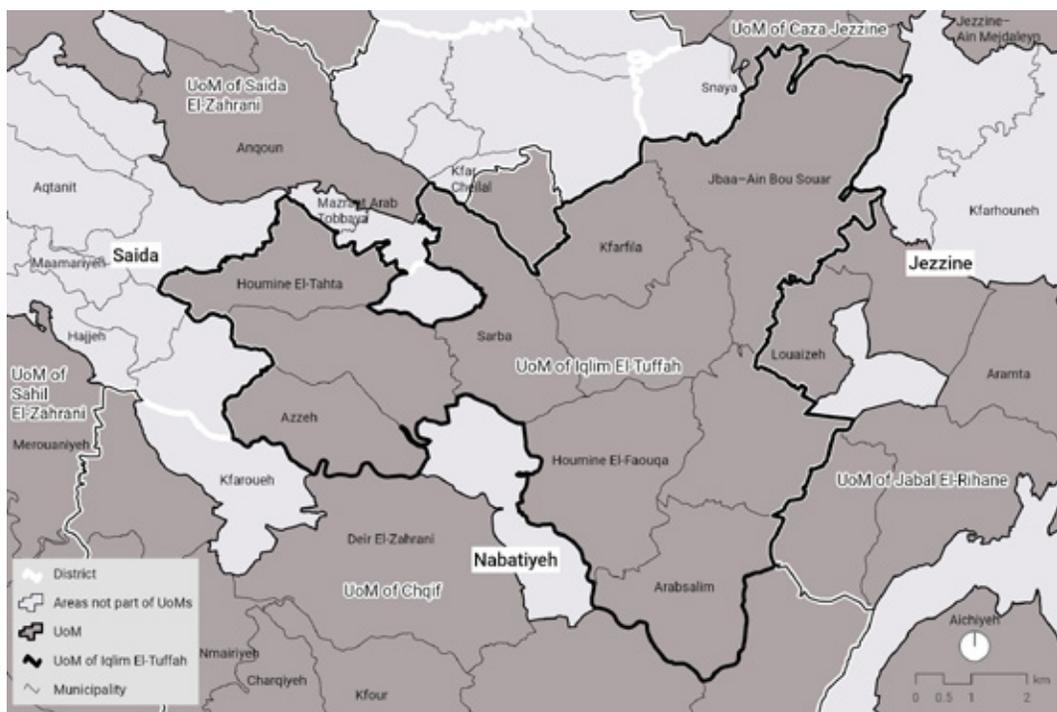
<sup>5</sup> Participatory rapid appraisal is a learning process that empowers people to conduct their own analysis to create the information base they need for participatory planning and action.

# Overview of the Union of Municipalities (UoM) of Iqlim El-Tuffah

## Geographical location and land cover/land use

Located in Nabatiyeh Governorate, the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah consists of 10 municipalities (Figure 3). Shortly before the project started, in 2017, one municipal council – Arabsalim – resigned, and that municipality has not been functioning or providing services anymore. The size of the municipal councils of the 10

municipalities varies; some have 9 members (AzzeH), others have 12 members (Kfarfila, Jarjouaa, Roumine and Sarba), and others have 15 members (Jbaa–Ain Bou Souar, Ain Qana, Houmine El-Faouqa and Houmine Et-Tahta).

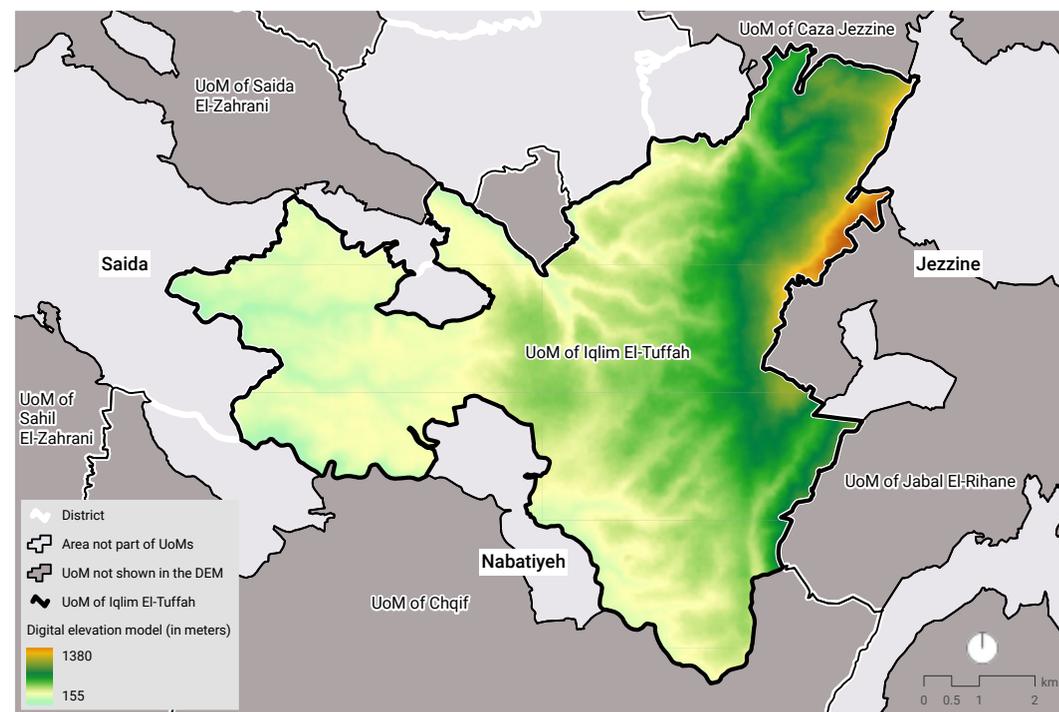


**Figure 3.** UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah with its municipalities. Source: UN-Habitat (2023). The boundaries of the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah based on its municipal composition were updated by the UN-Habitat GIS team, based on available data from the survey with the municipalities, open sources, and other relevant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

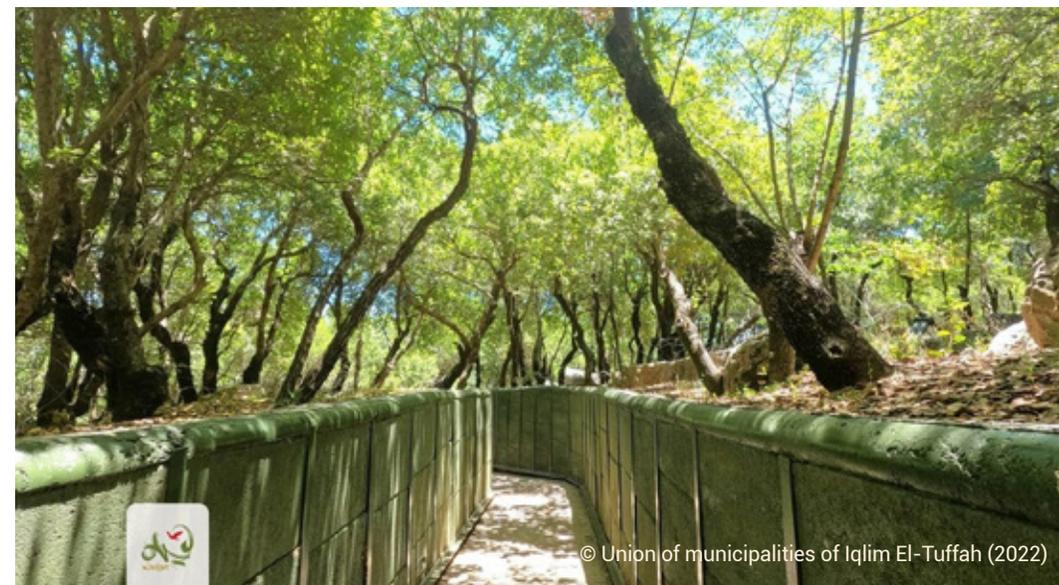
The total area of the UoM is approximately 64 square kilometres, and its elevation varies from around 155 metres above sea level, to around 1,380 metres at the highest point in Jabal Safi

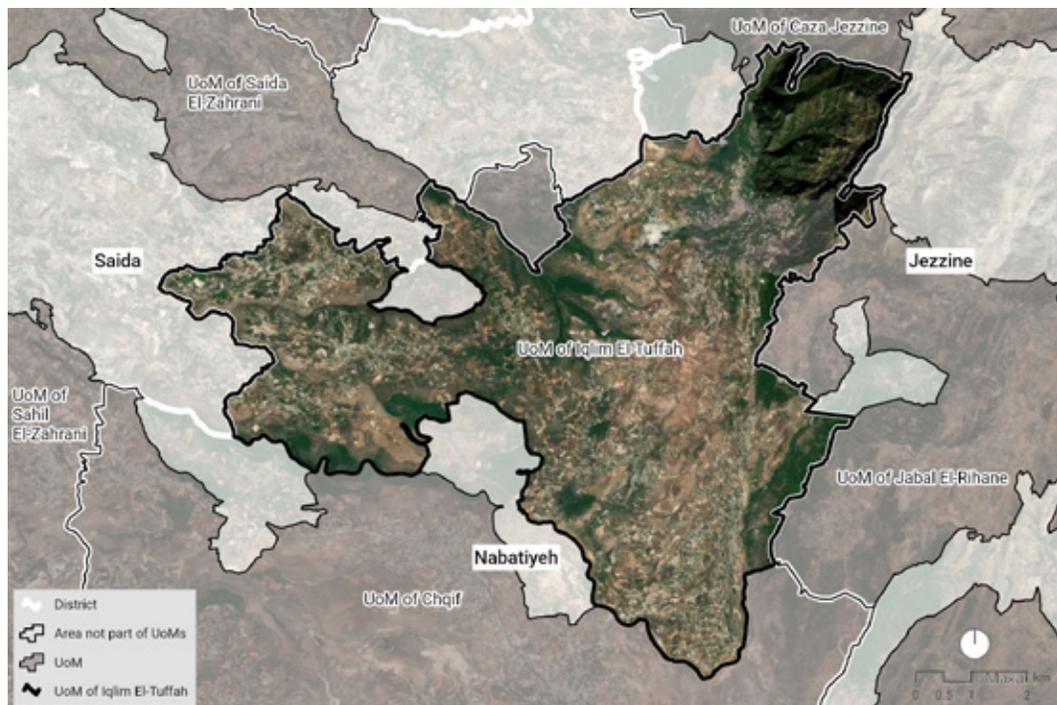
(Figure 4). The UoM is surrounded by the dark green mountain peaks of Safi, Mleeta, Sejoud and Jabal El-Rafii that slope southwards.

The UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah is distinguished by its location as a connecting point between the Districts of Nabatiyeh, Sidon (Saida) and Jezzine. It is administratively affiliated with the Nabatiyeh District and its governorate.



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



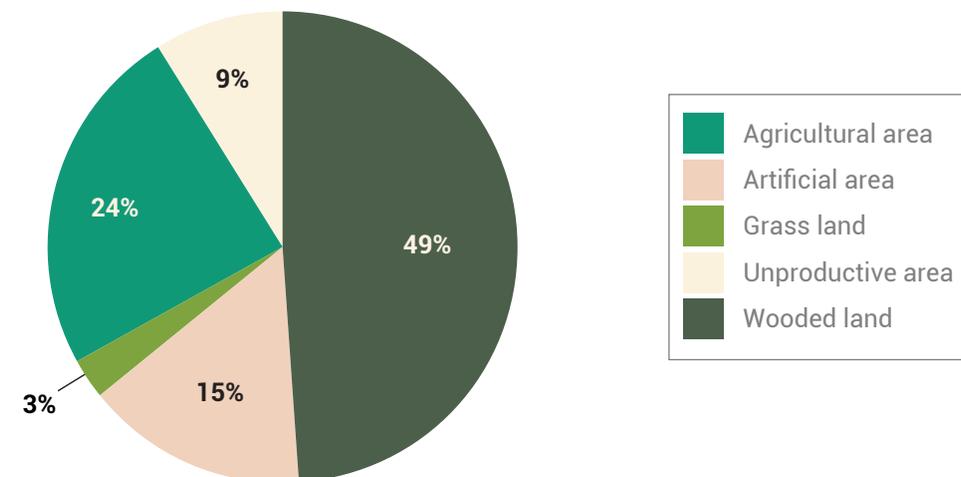


**Figure 5.** Satellite image of the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah. Source: UN-Habitat (2023). The high-resolution satellite image displayed in this map was extracted from Esri online World Imagery.

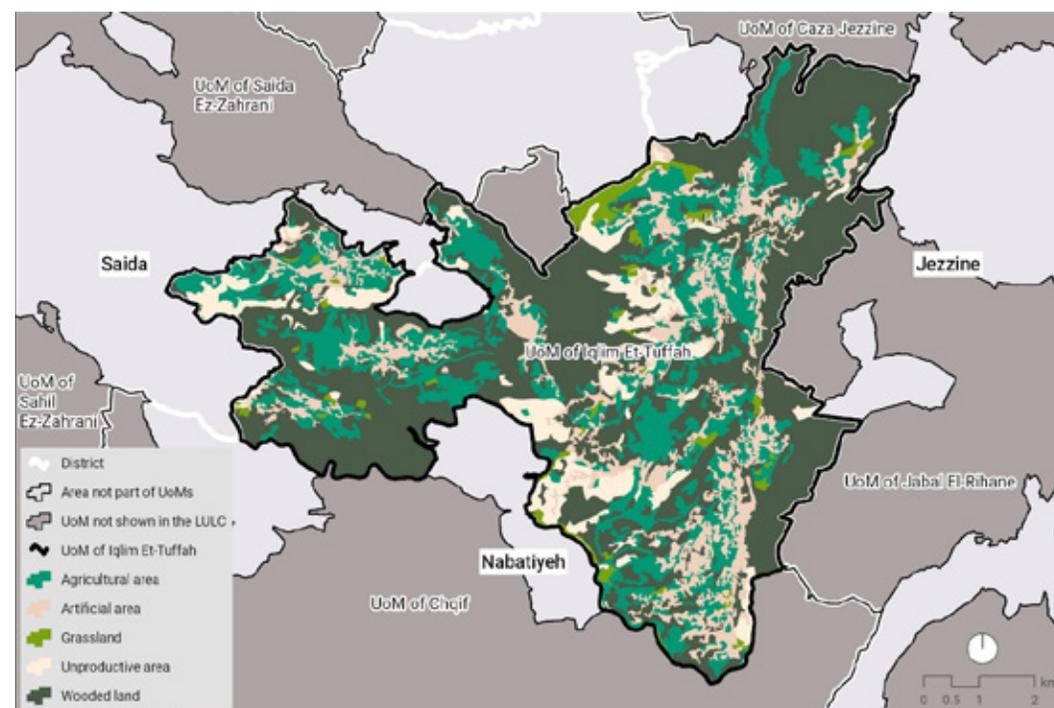
The union is also distinguished by its green environment, picturesque nature, and the beauty of its dense forests, which cover most of its area (Figures 5, 6 and 7) and contain a variety of forest trees. The UoM's name ("Iqlim El-Tuffah", which means "apple" in Arabic) is related to the growth of a specific type of apple-bearing trees in the area, which are distinct from other varieties of the fruit. The diversity of vegetation in the union has made it an attraction for nature lovers and ecotourism enthusiasts. Various vineyards are spread across it, the most important of which is olive vineyards, and its hills and mountains are covered by various types of evergreen forest trees. The UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah has dozens of springs and other water resources.

Wooded lands cover 49 per cent (31.23 km<sup>2</sup>) of the total area of the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah and agricultural areas span 24 per cent (15.6 km<sup>2</sup>), while artificial areas account for 15 per cent (9.56 km<sup>2</sup>). Unproductive areas (unused plots) and grassland make up 9 per cent (5.52 km<sup>2</sup>) and 3 per cent (1.71 km<sup>2</sup>) of the UoM's total area, respectively (Figures 6 and 7).<sup>6</sup>

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



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

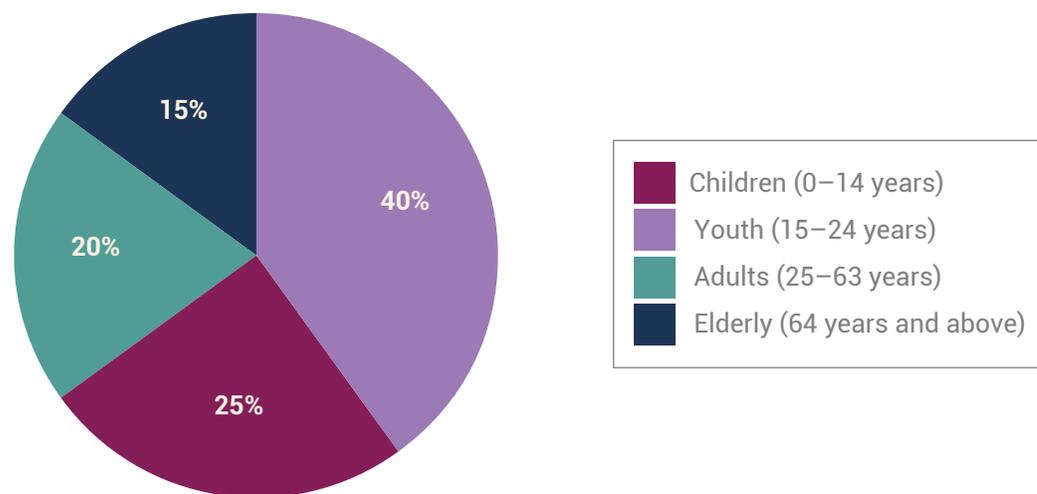


**Figure 7.** Land cover/land use within the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah. Source: UN-Habitat (2023), adapted from Land Cover/Land Use Map of Lebanon, scale 1:20000, Classification System Level 1, National Centre for Remote Sensing, CNRS-L (2017).

## Population overview

The total population of the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah is approximately 45,000 during winter and 60,000 during summer, with non-Lebanese (mostly Syrian refugees) constituting around 9 per cent, according to surveys conducted with the 10 municipalities of the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah (survey of Arabsalim was completed with the support of the Governor's office). There is also a very small number of families of different other nationalities in some areas of the union.

In terms of the age distribution of the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah's population, youth and children comprise 40 and 25 per cent, respectively, while the remaining are adults (20 per cent) and the elderly (15 per cent), according to the information provided by the mayors of the union (Figure 8).



**Figure 8.** Distribution of the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah's population by age.

Source: Survey conducted with municipalities.

Expatriates from the union form a significant percentage of the registered population, reaching around 18 per cent according to the Union of Iqlim El-Tuffah. Most of them reside in different countries in Africa, the Arabian Gulf and Europe. Emigration has a long history but increased especially during the years of the Lebanese war (1975-1990) and during the

ongoing economic crisis. Some expatriates contribute to supporting their families and relatives residing in the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah through regular remittances. These money transfers help these families face, at least to a certain degree, the challenges caused by the economic and financial crisis in the country.

## Basic services: Current state and recommendations for improvement

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

### Water

Water networks are available within all the towns of the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah, but their overall condition is not good, due to their age of installation and the absence of maintenance, which leads to water leakages, waste accumulation, contamination, and failure to reach homes and establishments in sufficient quantities. These networks are managed by the South Water Authority under the Ministry of Energy and Water, except for the network in Jbaa-Ain Bou Souar, which is managed directly by the municipality. The water networks are fed from springs and from 19 artesian wells.

Like other areas of Lebanon, the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah suffers from water shortages/absence of publicly supplied water, due to frequent power outages and high fuel prices affecting the normal operation of water pumps.

Within this context, the local stakeholders who were engaged in the assessment and analysis process that informed the production of this booklet recommended that the maintenance of the water networks – along with other basic services described below – is an important factor that can contribute to local economic and social development. One key aspect that they emphasized is to improve monitoring by local administrations and the relevant ministry to preserve and protect groundwater from pollution. This can be achieved through regular examination of well and spring water.

### Roads and transportation

The condition of roads within the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah is generally acceptable, but it varies among municipalities, ranging from average to less satisfactory, according to mayors,

the Nabatiyeh SDC coordinator and other stakeholders who were consulted with as part of the project. Most residents depend on the use of private cars and other vehicles, due to the lack of public transportation options. The main challenge that this sector suffers from is the lack of regular maintenance and rehabilitation of roads that connect the towns and villages of the union with one another. In addition, most roads lack sufficient nighttime lighting due to the absence of electricity. Safety measures on roads are minimal, with a lack of road signage, speed limit signs, other traffic safety signs, etc.

Therefore, local stakeholders engaged in this project considered that it is important to look for options to provide public transportation options. Also, they emphasized the need to enhance traffic safety on roads and ensure their maintenance, as well as provide nighttime street lighting – such as through the installation of solar-powered streetlights – to preserve the security of towns and the safety of their residents. Such efforts could contribute to local economic and social development, they argued.

### Buildings and facilities

As in most Lebanese towns, some areas within the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah are relatively more organized and have a master plan, while others are less organized, either because they do not have a master plan, or because they do have such a plan, but it is not respected or properly implemented and enforced during construction. Like in many Lebanese cities, there are frequent violations and encroachments in construction, especially in markets and squares; this contributes to the lack of green spaces between buildings. In most of the towns of the union, brickwork roofing is not mandatory.

The majority of housing units in the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah are owned, since most people build their houses on their own private lands, especially outside the major cities of the union, with approximately 20 per cent of units being rented, according to a consultation session with relevant local stakeholders.

Non-residential buildings and facilities include official buildings (municipalities, schools, etc.) mostly located in Jbaa–Ain Bou Souar, food industry factories are mostly located in Arabsalim, gold factory industries in Roumine, and chocolate industries in Houmine Et-Tahta. There are also touristic establishments, such as restaurants and small hotels.

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

## Electricity

The public electricity networks in UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah is in bad condition, as it needs a lot of maintenance and rehabilitation. Most of the towns of the union, and due to their near geographical area, benefits from Jezzine electricity for 20 hours a day. The rest of the union relies on the Électricité du Liban (EDL) company, in addition to subscribing to private generators and setting up alternative energy sources, such as solar power systems due to the long periods of power cuts. The main problems that the electricity sector suffers from are wear and tear of networks that have not been renewed for at least 50 years, encroachments on public networks, and the continuous public electricity outages.

Therefore, to empower municipalities to contribute to local economic and social development, local stakeholders who participated in the project considered it essential to improve the state of the electricity networks, along with other basic services.

## Sanitation and solid waste management

According to a consultation session with relevant local stakeholders, sewage networks are available within the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah with varying coverage rates. According to the Union, these networks were established according to scientific studies and meet the international specifications for sewage networks. However, only 20 per cent of the houses are connected to the main sewage network according to the Union; the rest are not connected to any network or station, and they rely on septic tanks, which are cleaned by the union and disposed of into other networks connected to refining stations in nearby regions. There are no refining stations in the union.

With regard to solid waste management at the time of writing, each municipality collects its own waste, and no private company has been contracted for waste collection. Untreated waste is disposed by being transported to random dumps dispersed in remote areas of the union. This contributes to air and soil pollution as well as the spread of diseases. The Union is currently working in coordination with the European Union to find solutions to solid waste management challenges. One of the proposed solutions entails the establishment of a factory for waste sorting and treatment, with the participation of local communities in the union; this could have environmental and health benefits, while helping create new job opportunities.

One key recommendation voiced by local stakeholders who participated in the project with regard to the sanitation situation was to work on developing an action plan and to urge the relevant official bodies to create sewage networks and treatment plants in the area, adhering to scientific standards and specifications during their construction. It was emphasized to focus on the establishment of a sorting and processing facility plant, in collaboration with the Union's local communities and stakeholders, in order to improve the environment, promote good health, and generate employment. In addition to the completion of sewage network in the areas where there is no sewage network connection,

and work to connect the network to the refining station that is planned to be established in the city of Saida, while taking into account all the necessary scientific and environmental conditions and specifications.

## Telecommunications

According to the Union, cellular and internet services in the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah are in average condition. There are two types of networks in the union: Ogero, which is ran by

the government, and Alfa and Touch, which are private mobile phone service providers. While Ogero's service is good due to the availability of electricity in their centres, Alfa's and Touch's services are very bad due to the continued loss of signal transmission in most of the areas of the union as explained by its representative.

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

## Social services: Current state and recommendations for improvement

### Health care

Health-care services are available in the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah through three health centres of both governmental and private facilities. The most important of which is the Health Centre in Jbaa–Ain Bou Souar, as it provides several services, including laboratory tests and x-rays. The quality and cost of services provided in the centres are considered relatively acceptable, taking into consideration the current economic situation in the country. However, many residents often have to incur high transportation costs to reach these health centres, as they are geographically far away. Another challenge facing the health sector in the union is the lack of hospitals, as the nearest hospital is 30 minutes away from the residential areas, causing a big problem especially in case of emergencies. In addition, due to the dire economic situation, dispensaries often find it difficult to attract doctors. To help address this issue, the union tries to support dispensaries and citizens from time to time by providing free services, such as examinations, laboratory tests and x-rays. However, this remains a temporary and partial solution.

Overall, the health-care services in the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah moderately meet the health-care needs of its communities. They therefore sometimes need to seek health care outside of the union, increasing the cost of medical bills, especially for patients with chronic

conditions, who already have increasingly high costs of medication. Additionally, the high transportation costs prevent many from seeking the health-care services they need, as mentioned above.

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

More concretely, one of the proposed solutions to improve the health care situation in the union was to support the health centre in Jbaa–Ain Bou Souar by creating an emergency department there, fully equipping it and securing the appropriate medical staff, as well as allowing all the municipalities under the union to benefit from the centre.

### Education

According to the Union, the education sector in the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah is generally considered to be in good condition compared to other sectors. There are 12 public and 1 private primary school in the union, covering

all educational levels. In addition, the union has three secondary schools and two vocational ones, but it has no universities.

The government's inability to support the sector with sufficient funding and the frequency of strikes have resulted in poor and inadequate educational services at public and vocational schools.

In addition, there is a lack of practical laboratories in the vocational schools. Moreover, the deteriorated educational system in public schools, and the poor infrastructural buildings requiring rehabilitation and equipment, have negatively affected the quality of educational services. The lack of heating in the classrooms of most schools is a major challenge during winter, due to the lack of equipment, fuel, and electricity. The union also suffers from weak internet services for online learning, due to the frequent power outage.

Moreover, parents suffer from very high school fees, and they also complain about the high cost of transportation for students who receive their education outside their towns.

Within this context, local stakeholders engaged in the project argued that efforts are required to support public schools by maintaining their buildings, providing necessary equipment, improving conditions for distance learning, and ensuring fair distribution of teachers among schools. Furthermore, according to local stakeholders, it is crucial to work on providing subsidized transportation for students in both schools and universities, and supporting vocational institutes to add new specializations that align with the needs of the local job market. Equipping these institutes with the necessary facilities and laboratories is also considered as essential.

### Culture and public spaces

On the cultural front, prior to the ongoing socioeconomic crisis that began in 2019, the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah had an active social and cultural landscape – with cultural seminars, lectures, educational programmes, and recreational activities that catered to all social groups. The union used to organize periodic workshops for

youth and women to help them master some handicrafts and other skills that could support them in finding income-generating opportunities, in addition to cultural programmes such as those related to the care of the elderly in the Elderly Care Centre in Kfarfila. However, the crisis has hindered the continuation of such programmes, due to the high costs associated with transportation and the necessary resources to hold these events/activities.

The UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah has public gardens and other open spaces, six existing and one under construction, that provide locations for relaxation, entertainment, walking and sports – as well as social interaction – for all community members in the area, according to the representative of the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah. The main public spaces are in Jarjouaa, Arabsalim and Houmine Et-Tahta. In general, the public spaces are in good condition with minor maintenance needed, especially in terms of kids' playground and equipment.

Local stakeholders recommended that efforts should be undertaken to enhance the role of municipalities in supporting and empowering associations and clubs, involving them in funding and implementing cultural and social initiatives in the area, particularly addressing the needs of young people.

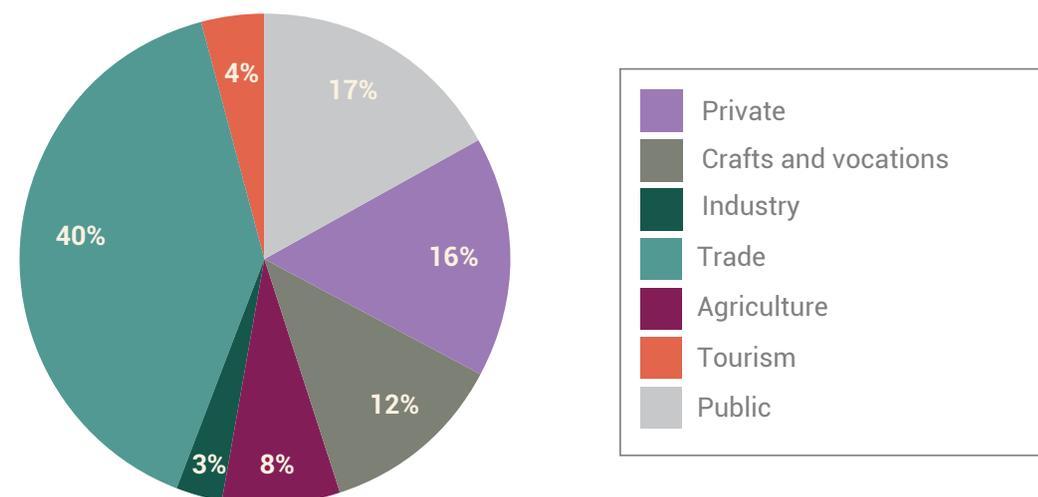
### Sports

The sports sector in the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah engages many athletes and professionals from various sports, such as football, basketball, karate, billiards, etc. The sports sector, like other sectors, faces various challenges, such as the lack of sports facilities (e.g. football fields, basketball courts, etc.), the high cost of transportation to facilities outside the union, the absence of awareness campaigns emphasizing the importance of sports on both individual and community levels, and the lack of funding.

Within this context, local stakeholders involved in the project emphasized the importance of raising awareness among residents in the union about the value and benefits of sports, especially related to health.

## Local economy and livelihoods: Current state

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



**Figure 9.** Distribution of employment by sector in the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah.  
Source: Survey conducted with municipalities.

### Public sector

Approximately 17 per cent of the workforce in the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah is employed in the public sector, according to the survey conducted with municipalities within the union (Figure 9). Thus, this sector constitutes a significant source of income for many households in the union. Those employed in the public sector are distributed within the age group of 20 to 64 years. In terms of gender distribution, public sector employees are divided into 90 per cent males and 10 per cent females, according to data collected through the survey with the municipalities of the union. Public sector employees in the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah are employed in a wide range of institutions, including the military, internal security forces, Lebanese general security, state security, as well as civil registries, central telecommunication centres, public schools, municipalities, general positions in public forestry centres, civil defence,

etc. These institutions are either located within the union's municipalities or outside of the union; in the latter case, employees need to incur an additional financial burden related to transportation to and from their job locations.

### Private sector

The private sector represents around 16 per cent of the workforce in the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah, according to the survey conducted with municipalities within the union (Figure 9). It includes employment in private schools, companies, banks, restaurants, and other establishments located within or outside the union. In terms of gender distribution, the workforce employed in the private sector comprises mostly (around 60 per cent) males, according to the same survey conducted with the municipalities within the union.

## Crafts and vocations

The percentage of workers in different crafts and vocations is estimated to be around 12 per cent of the total workforce, according to the survey conducted with municipalities within the union (Figure 9). In terms of gender distribution, males reportedly make up the majority (around 70 per cent), working in construction-related fields (e.g. painting, tiling, electrics, plumbing) as well as in crafts and industries like carpentry and blacksmithing. The remaining 30 per cent are reportedly females working in such fields as sewing, hairstyling, female adornment, and food manufacturing.

## Agriculture

After the economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of people engaged in the agriculture sector increased, according to information from the union president and the survey filled out by the municipalities, 30 per cent of them resorted to it to secure a minimum level of self-sufficiency, while 8 per cent farm to trade (Figure 9). This was evident in the increase in demand for green houses during the past three years as stated by the farmers in the focus group discussions with the project team. In terms of age distribution of the workers in the agriculture sector, young people (aged 25 years and above) have become more interested in land cultivation, in light of the economic difficulties in the country. The representation of women in the agriculture sector is considerably low and is mainly concentrated in the towns of Arabsalim, Houmine Et-Tahta and Kfarfila.

The estimated area of agricultural lands is about 15.6 km<sup>2</sup> (24.52 per cent) of the union's total area (Figures 6 and 7). Various crops are cultivated, the most important of which are olives, walnuts, and carobs. Carob cultivation is of utmost importance due to its great benefits on individual overall health and its rapid growth. Besides carobs, apples, pears, and peaches are also cultivated, in addition to avocado trees on the sides of roads, under the management and supervision of the municipalities. Moreover, animal husbandry is quite prevalent; it includes fish farming (only one farm in Jarjouaa), livestock farming, and beekeeping.

Many farmers who participated in consultative meetings conducted during the project mentioned that the main challenges in the agriculture sector include the reliance on

traditional irrigation methods and the need to transition to rain-fed agriculture. Additional challenges include the high costs of seeds, fertilizers, advanced irrigation system, and marketing (sales, packaging, branding, etc.). Moreover, there is water scarcity during the summer season as well as a lack of crop diversification. Additionally, farmers complained about the limited internal markets for production distribution.

## Industry

The UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah is distinguished by various important industries, such as gold industries located in Roumine; three medium-to-large dairy and cheese factories in Arabsalim; some medium-sized sweets and tahini factories (e.g. halawa and tahini factory in Jbaa El-Nabaiyeh–Ain Bou Souar); some small factories (such as the carob molasses and carob powder factory in Arabsalim); a chocolate manufacturing factory in Houmine Et-Tahta; two plastic recycling factories in Kfarfila; and four refining plants and water distribution to households, institutions and shops in Arabsalim, Jbaa–Ain Bou Souar and Houmine Et-Tahta. There are also some other small industries, such as blacksmithing, carpentry and tailoring. A small percentage of workers are engaged in the industry sector in the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah, reaching a maximum of 3 per cent of the workforce, according to the survey conducted with municipalities within the union (Figure 9).

Most of the goods produced by industries in the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah are consumed and sold in markets within the union, mainly in Jbaa–Ain Bou Souar's Friday market, while some are also exported to surrounding areas. Most of the gold factories sell their goods across the country and even export abroad.

As mentioned in a consultative meeting with relevant stakeholders in the union, the industry sector faces various challenges, such as the inability of some factories to sell their products and open up to new markets, the instability of the United States Dollar exchange rates compared to the Lebanese Pound, labour shortage due to emigration and low salaries, frequent power outages, high transportation costs, the need for machinery development and modernization, and competition from imported foreign goods.

## Trade

Commercial establishments are present in most municipalities included within the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah, with the majority being small-sized businesses. Commercial activities in the union are limited to the trading of food supplies; clothing retail; shops selling household and electrical appliances; mobile phone shops; pharmacies; fuel stations; bakeries; and butcher shops. The percentage of workers engaged in the trade sector in the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah is relatively high compared to other sectors, reaching around 40 per cent of the workforce, according to the survey conducted with municipalities within the union (Figure 9).

The trade sector faces similar challenges to those of the industry sector, including persistent power outages and competition from imported foreign goods. Other challenges within this sector include decreased sales due to the reduced purchasing power of customers, noticeable investment decline due to the ongoing economic crisis, and exchange rate volatility, impeding proper pricing aligned with costs and purchasing power. The Chamber of Industry and Commerce in the nearby city of Saida creates job and networking opportunities.

## Tourism

The UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah is distinguished by its good tourism potential, mostly thanks to its large forest areas (Figures 6 and 7) and other natural and religious landmarks, such as natural springs, valleys, multiple hiking trails, the shrine of the Prophet Safi, two ancient castles in Jbaa–Ain Bou Souar and Jarjouaa, a fort in Ain Qana, and other archaeological monuments.

Despite the vast green forest areas and beautiful scenic views in the union, the touristic institutions are limited to seasonal chalets for rent, guesthouses, swimming pools, a large hotel in Jbaa–Ain Bou Souar, the Mleeta Resistance Touristic war museum, and some restaurants. The tourism sector in UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah is relatively developing in terms of the percentage of income from the recent established getaways, bungalows, and Airbnb (Air bed and breakfast) in the district developing tourism activities on one hand, and the percentage of local investment on the other hand. The percentage of workers engaged in the tourism sector is around 4 per cent of the workforce, according to the survey

conducted with municipalities within the union (Figure 9).

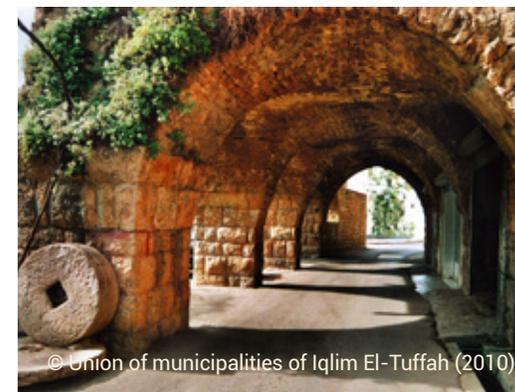
Municipal leaders and stakeholders within the union explained the challenges the tourism sector is facing, emphasizing on the absence of tourism planning undertaken by municipal administrations, local leaders, and civil and tourism institutions. Other challenges include the cessation of annual festivals, which used to be held previously by the union, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing economic crisis in the country, as well as the inadequate infrastructure and failure to pave roads and provide traffic safety conditions.

## Remittances from abroad

According to the survey with the municipalities, around 18 per cent of the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah's registered population have emigrated over the years. There are two main types of emigrants:

- Those who left their towns and emigrated with their families a long time ago and maintain little contact with their relatives in Lebanon and with the union.
- Those that emigrated recently for socioeconomic reasons, the majority of whom are young. Most of them keep a close relationship with their families/friends who have stayed behind and send remittances regularly.

Most expatriates belong to the affluent class and help their families and relatives, particularly in light of the recent economic downturn. The expatriates rarely finance services that municipalities were unable to provide due to the collapse of the Lebanese pound exchange rates.



## Recommendations for sectors identified as key for future local socioeconomic development

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

“ Iqlim El-Tuffah: the pearl of the South, an area with diverse vegetation, strong industries, vibrant and courageous youth, that is rich in its archaeological and heritage landmarks.”

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

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

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

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

from different local stakeholders through a participatory approach.

Other sectors (such as industry, trade, crafts, and vocations) will undoubtedly continue to play a role in the socioeconomic growth of Iqlim El-Tuffah's towns and villages. However, local stakeholders involved in the project believed that these other sectors could also be promoted in a way that aligns with the union's vision and aspirations for agriculture and tourism. By performing a complementary function, the industrial sector, for example, can help improve the agriculture and tourism sectors. As a result, local stakeholders involved in the project saw it as critical to work on preserving the Union's small enterprises and promoting specific industrial crafts through specialized training to improve competencies and abilities. This necessitates obtaining alternative and cost-effective electricity sources, assisting industry owners, protecting local production from competition, and establishing markets for both domestic and external distribution of the products.

Local players involved in the project emphasized that encouraging investment in industries is critical to attracting young people and discouraging their migration to activate the trade sector. They proposed promoting individual online trading initiatives, incentivizing youth, and women to establish small commercial projects through networking and collaboration with organizations working in this sector, and training traders in the union on the fundamentals of sales, purchasing, marketing, feasibility studies for their projects, and the development of income-generating ventures. They saw such initiatives as beneficial in terms of creating and providing employment possibilities for the youth of the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah.

If the union and the relevant municipalities prioritize the growth of the tourism and agriculture sectors other critical social and basic services must also be provided. These services aid in the retention of Lebanese people in their towns and villages, as well as the attraction of other population groups to work in the fields. If the union is to attract investments from outside the region, basic utilities such as roads, water,

and power must be accessible. Furthermore, it is critical to improve health-care services in existing clinics by providing them with medical equipment and pharmaceuticals, as well as a comprehensive emergency response plan. A long-term solid waste management strategy should be established throughout the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah.

## Agriculture

As demonstrated above in the presentation of the current state of sectors within the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah, including available resources and potential opportunities, the agriculture sector represents a significant and real opportunity for the union's residents in terms of improving their economic situation and increasing employment opportunities for both youth and families. While many families engage in agriculture as a hobby or as a secondary or supplemental source of income, certain initiatives, programmes, and projects can result in substantive improvement of this sector. This necessitates the combined efforts and skills of municipalities, civil society institutions, and the corporate sector, as well as donor funding, to advance sustainable agricultural development.

According to local stakeholders involved in the project, strengthening the agriculture sector necessitates infrastructural interventions such as creating and upgrading agricultural roads that allow people to reach and cultivate their properties. Water is also seen as a critical component for agricultural development, so towns and other related bodies must endeavor to protect groundwater, increase water reserves, install advanced irrigation systems, and seek to harvest rainwater. This involves encouraging farmers to irrigate with treated wastewater. To initiate this process, it was suggested to establish an entity or committee of agricultural stakeholders at the union level including representatives from municipalities, agricultural cooperatives, civil society organizations, farmers and the private sector. The committee would oversee the development of an action plan for agricultural growth with short-, medium-, and long-term goals. Considering a logical timeframe, each stage would include a series of programmes and interventions addressing agricultural infrastructure and human skill development. The committee

should also collaborate with governmental, non-governmental, and international partners to distribute and promote the agreed-upon road map and priority initiatives. To improve contact with a broader range of supporting entities, this entity could form subcommittees.

It was also suggested to supply agricultural lands with irrigation water by subsidizing the cost of water pumping from municipal and public wells, as many farmers cannot afford water irrigation costs. Local stakeholders also argued that it is essential to think and work towards finding alternative means of obtaining irrigation water. This could involve capturing rainwater in ponds or reservoirs and adopting drip irrigation methods in strategic locations, such as agricultural areas. Additionally, organizing the distribution of irrigation water through the management of independent water committees is crucial, it was argued.

Local stakeholders who participated in the project viewed the activation of existing agricultural cooperatives (such as beekeeping and livestock); training of farmers and strengthening of agricultural guidance; and, empowerment of farmers with modern agricultural knowledge and technical expertise as important. Farmers need to be assisted in marketing their agricultural products by improving the source-to-market connection, livestock breeders need to be trained to produce and use locally made fodder to reduce reliance on imported feed. The opportunity of training unemployed young adults in agricultural skills in an attempt to provide them with employment opportunities and contribute to the reduction of delinquent behavior was also noted. These approaches, it was argued, may help encourage and enhance agricultural and livestock production. Additionally, technical programmes offered by donor organizations and relevant

official institutions, such as ministries, were regarded to play a crucial role in these efforts.

Local stakeholders believed that it was also crucial to perform soil testing and promote cultivation of alternative crops that are compatible with the effects of climate change to revitalize agriculture. Introducing new crops to the union, as well as growing arboreal crops for nutrition, as well as developing a brand for packaging and exporting agricultural products on a national and international scale, were also recognized as critical tasks. Furthermore, local stakeholders believe that it is essential to introduce food products that are compatible with the ecology and characteristics of the union's region, while also considering renewable energy sources that can minimize the effects of climate change. Another suggestion shared, was to establish an electronic network to enhance

connectivity amongst farmers to support each other in monitoring their farming processes while establishing an agricultural centre in the area where they can seek guidance and gain additional skills and expertise.

Local stakeholders also underlined the importance of focusing on animal husbandry by implementing veterinary care, instructing farmers on administering appropriate medications, conducting frequent check-ups, and maintaining livestock well-being.

Local stakeholders also stated that agriculture may play an important role in enhancing tourism, focusing on restaurants that can benefit from the union's production of staple and renewable crops, as well as revitalizing, developing, and promoting handmade food manufacturing.



# Proposed agriculture sector road map

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

Short time to achieve

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

Medium time to achieve

- Relying on solar energy as a source for operating wells for irrigation
- Improving investment in agriculture and developing/diversifying seasonal crops and fruit bearing trees

- Enhancing the work of agricultural cooperatives and activating their role
- Building a strong relationship with the Ministry of Agriculture and enhancing collaboration
- Collaborating with civil defence and other relevant authorities to develop and implement a comprehensive plan for fire prevention and control

- Establishing a business incubator to benefit from existing expertise in the union and provide new job opportunities or create opportunities for small projects
- Guiding youth to reduce migration
- Activating the relationship with expatriates and involving them in financing and marketing projects
- Training residents in food processing and local food production
- Activating agricultural guidance and training
- Preparing and implementing recurring awareness campaigns to encourage residents to engage in agricultural activities
- Developing and implementing advertising and media campaigns to highlight the importance of agricultural products in the union

Long time to achieve

- Collaborating with ministries and municipalities to establish a sustainable plan for infrastructure maintenance
- Providing clean water for irrigation
- Constructing and maintaining agricultural roads
- Treating sewage water and using it for irrigation of specific crops
- Establishing modern irrigation systems for agriculture
- Striving to establish centres for agricultural training and guidance

- Activating municipal and official accountability to halt encroachments on public properties, forests and woodlands
- Establishing relationships with donor organizations to secure funding and resources for the implementation of projects, ensuring successful collaboration and project execution

- Conserving the natural resources in the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah and leveraging their potential for sustainable development
- Protecting groundwater resources
- Limiting urban expansion at the expense of agricultural lands
- Preserving soil by establishing proper waste disposal sites
- Creating reserves to preserve natural resources
- Developing and implementing municipal regulations to conserve resources and natural areas

Infrastructure

Institutional framework

Natural resources

Human resources

## Tourism

The UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah possesses abundant natural, heritage, climatic and human resources, which form the fundamental elements that can be built upon to revitalize the tourism sector in the union. While the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah has the essential elements to activate and enhance the tourism sector, it requires massive efforts and resources in terms of infrastructure and the commitment of public, private and local civil society institutions to work together, each according to its capabilities.

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

An important initial step that was identified by local stakeholders was for the UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah, in collaboration with civil society organizations, to seek moderate funding to develop a realistic tourism plan based on the available resources mentioned above. The plan should propose a realistic timeframe, considering the existing challenges in terms of infrastructure and institutional framework, as well as the required duration for capacity development. Moreover, the plan must include a fundamental aspect that focuses on formulating appropriate policies and legal frameworks for preserving natural and heritage resources. The plan must include sufficient flexibility to allow for its implementation in multiple stages, based on priorities and the available financial resources for all interventions. It should also take into consideration the economic and financial conditions prevailing in Lebanon.

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

- Establishing a tourism committee that includes representatives from municipalities, the union, the civil society, youth associations, and other interested parties, whose task will be to coordinate and communicate with relevant entities in the tourism sector. The

committee can also engage with expatriates and seek funding for small projects.

- Identifying and mapping natural, heritage, cultural and historical tourist sites and preparing a clear map for them. University graduates proficient in GIS can be enlisted for this purpose.
- Working on promoting the union through the media and positioning it on the national tourism map. University students and some commercial institutions can be involved in creating a tourism marketing plan (posters, brochures, advertisements on TV and social media).
- Encouraging municipalities and local associations to establish and maintain walking trails within forests and woodlands.
- Promoting different types of sports that can attract tourists, commensurate with the elevation and other geographical characteristics of the union.
- Activating cultural, recreational and sports activities in the area and organizing annual festivals that attract expatriates to encourage them to invest and support the tourism sector in the union.

Moreover, local stakeholders considered that it is crucial to examine the experiences of other unions in different regions of Lebanon to learn from them, adapt them to the union's context, and benefit from available expertise.

Besides developing the tourism sector, the importance of integrating the tourism and agriculture sectors was also highlighted.



# Proposed tourism sector road map

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

Short time to achieve

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

Medium time to achieve

- Maintaining roads leading to landmarks and tourist areas
- Relying on solar energy as a source to provide energy for tourist areas and facilities
- Providing permanent lighting during the night within tourist areas and landmarks

- Enhancing collaboration between municipalities and the private sector
- Striving to develop a tourism plan for the union
- Involving local NGOs dedicated to local development in the tourism planning process
- Building relationships with existing universities to support tourism guidance for university students
- Activating municipal and official accountability to prevent encroachments on tourist landmarks, forests, woodlands, springs, rivers, etc.
- Building relationships with donor organizations to facilitate project implementation

Long time to achieve

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

- Working on increasing and incentivizing investments in tourism projects

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

- Training and empowering youth to provide tourism services
- Establishing tourism centres and training tourist guides
- Establishing a sports academy that includes a football field, other sportsfields, a gym, a small garden for children, and a cafeteria
- Organizing regular tourist festivals
- Preparing and implementing recurrent awareness campaigns to encourage locals to engage in the tourism development process
- Creating and executing advertising and media campaigns about touristic sites and tourism activities in the union
- Encouraging families to establish guesthouses and rooms to enhance local tourism
- Activating relations with expatriates and encouraging them to invest in tourism projects

## Infrastructure

## Institutional framework

## Natural resources

## Human resources



## Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

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