



**Assessing Basic
Socio-Economic Indicators
in Northern Lebanon:**

**RAP for Planning
the Development of
Vulnerable Communities**

Assessment Report



IOM International Organization for Migration

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International Organization for Migration
17 route des Morillons
1211 Geneva 19
Switzerland
Tel: +41.22.717 91 11
Fax: +41.22.798 61 50
E-mail: hq@iom.int
Internet: <http://www.iom.int>

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International Organization for Migration (IOM)
Research Team
Research Conception: Othman Belbeisi
Assistant Researcher: Cosette Maiky

Editorial Team
Editors: Othman Belbeisi and Kamal Abouchedid

For more information, contact Othman Belbeisi at: obelbeisi@iom.int

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Executive Summary

Supported by funds from the Government of Greece, this needs assessment presents the living conditions of the residents of 2,000 households in three districts in Northern Lebanon (Akkar, Menyeh/Danniyeh, and Tripoli and its suburbs), in an effort to explore opportunities for their development, especially taking into account the conditions and demands of the communities evaluated.

This report consists of demographic, socio-economic, educational, and health status information that will be used to identify areas where targeted interventions and policy changes can have the greatest impact. The report has the following sections:

1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Sample;
2. Households' Perception of their Current Economic Instability;
3. Households' Perception of their Current Health Situation;
4. Households' Perception of their Children's Current Educational Situation;
5. Households' Perception of Primary Infrastructure Availability and Access.

A synopsis of the key findings of each of the above sections is presented below.

1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

The demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the surveyed households are reviewed in this section. These characteristics are often strong predictors of access to health care and education.

The information provided in this section aims to profile these districts in order to determine demographic and socio-economic barriers, and explore opportunities to improve the living conditions of the communities assessed. The data presented is for the total population, as well as per district when available and as relevant.

Households from Tripoli and its surroundings comprised the biggest group, accounting for 45.7 per cent of the total sample. Households from Akkar constituted 32.6 per cent of the total sample, while those from Menyeh/Danniyeh accounted for 21.7 per cent.

The socio-economic level of the households was determined based on the father's monthly salary and type of job. Results showed that the highest percentage of

breadwinners held jobs in the “artisans and popular jobs” category. On the other hand, only 3 per cent had jobs in the top categories, namely “big owners/big traders”, “high cadres” and “liberal jobs”.

With regard to parents’ level of education, the father was illiterate in 9.5 per cent of the households surveyed. In 15.9 per cent of the households, it was the mother who was illiterate. It is interesting to note that the percentage of mothers with university degrees was slightly higher than that for fathers (7.3% and 6.9%, respectively). It is also noteworthy that 83.7 per cent of mothers were housewives.

Concerning religious affiliation, Sunnis comprised 82.5 per cent of the sampled households, since the districts surveyed were predominantly Sunni. Christians of all sects made up 6.4 per cent and Alawite, 10.6 per cent.

As for nationality, 2.2 per cent of the households surveyed were non-Lebanese, whereas 0.6 per cent of the sampled households had both Lebanese and non-Lebanese members.

The number of children per household varied between 1 and 17 with an average of 5.3 children per household. The average number of children enrolled in schools per household was 3.8.

In terms of living conditions, 73.9 per cent of the surveyed households owned their homes. The number of rooms per house varied between 1 and 11 with an average of 3.9 rooms.

2. Households’ Perception of their Current Economic Situation

Forty per cent of respondents in Akkar reported an income of “below 500,000 LBP” (333.33 USD) per month, whereas the percentages for Menyeh/Danniyeh and Tripoli were 57 per cent and 39.9 per cent, respectively.

In estimating material losses, 50.4 per cent of households in Akkar reported that they lost their source of income in the last three years, whereas figures for Menyeh/Danniyeh and Tripoli were 72.8 per cent and 69.1 per cent, respectively.

The war was the main reason for the loss of income for the majority of households in the three districts (47%). Natural disasters were also an important cause, accounting for 10 per cent of the responses. More than one reason for loss of income was cited by 20.6 per cent of the households surveyed.

In Akkar, 3.8 per cent of households reported receiving financial compensation. In Menyeh/Danniyeh, the figure was at 7.5 per cent; in Tripoli, it was at 6.1 per cent. The overall percentage (total sample) did not exceed 5 per cent.

Loans were a popular alternative source of income in each district (29% of households in Akkar, 23% in Menyeh/Danniyeh, and 29% in Tripoli and its surroundings). For the total sample, loans were the top alternative (28%), followed by help from parents and friends (13.3%), and own business (12%). Some 14 per cent reported more than one alternative source of income.

With regard to remedial steps that could boost the region's economy, 180 families in Tripoli chose the creation of job opportunities in educational and health institutions; 88 families opted for the provision of micro loans for small businesses; 70 families wanted support for food manufacturing; and 60 families chose support for artisanal and handcrafted goods.

As for the high-altitude villages of Menyeh/Danniyeh and Akkar, the responses mirrored those in Tripoli. Forty-four families in Menyeh/Danniyeh and 71 families in Akkar cited the creation of job opportunities in health and educational institutions for the relative security the functional position can bring. However, special emphasis was given to supporting agriculture by 49 families in Menyeh/Danniyeh and 58 families in Akkar. As for supporting poultry and livestock, the number of positive answers was low, most probably because modern farms have replaced traditional means. Additionally, the avian flu threat over the past few years had forced farmers to kill thousands of birds without receiving compensation for their losses.

Considering training that could help increase job opportunities or boost existing ones, special emphasis was given to developing the basic skills of working men in all three districts by 150 families in Akkar, 131 in Menyeh/Danniyeh, and 291 in Tripoli. Developing housewives' skills was emphasized in Tripoli (102 families) more than in Akkar (59 families) and Menyeh/Danniyeh (30 families), due to cultural norms in remote traditional areas that may cloister women in the house. In line with this, 124 families in Tripoli endorsed enhancing the language and information technology (IT) skills of employees, due to the nature of employment in a commercial city such as Tripoli.

About 11.9 per cent of the surveyed households reported that they were currently receiving material assistance (13.3%, 13.8%, and 10% for Akkar, Menyeh/Danniyeh, and Tripoli, respectively).

3. Households' Perception of their Current Health Situation

Chronic diseases such as diabetes, renal failure, hypertension and cardiopathies were the most common diseases among parents in all three districts. As for children, pulmonary and respiratory diseases were the most widespread in all three districts.

In estimating the prevalence of vaccination among children, 75.8 per cent of the respondents surveyed in Akkar affirmed that their children received all their vaccines, whereas the percentages for Menyeh/Danniyeh and Tripoli were 66.5 per cent and 79.7 per cent, respectively. In tandem with this, the percentage of families whose children have medical records was 65.9 per cent in Akkar, 59.2 per cent in Menyeh/Danniyeh, and 74.7 per cent in Tripoli.

Regarding the frequency of children's visits to the dentist, 28.2 per cent of the total sample reported one visit per year. The frequency of visits to the ophthalmologist showed similarities in all three districts, with majority of the families reporting that they have never visited one (40.9% in Akkar, 46.1% in Menyeh/Danniyeh and 37.5% in Tripoli). The "never" responses accounted for 40.5 per cent for the total sample.

About 70 per cent of the surveyed households in Akkar reported that they visit general health practitioners in case of somatic complaints in the family, whereas the percentage was 54.6 per cent for Menyeh/Danniyeh and 73.6 per cent for Tripoli. For those who do not visit general health practitioners, the main reason reported in all three districts was the high cost of health services in the surveyed areas, where people refer to pharmacists' advice instead of going for professional medical consultation.

In estimating the availability of medical services in the surveyed areas, 47.9 per cent of the households in Akkar reported that primary health care (PHC) services were available in their areas. The figures for Menyeh/Danniyeh and Tripoli were 34.8 per cent and 50.3 per cent, respectively.

The percentage of beneficiaries of any kind of medical or social assistance in the surveyed areas did not exceed 15 per cent in all three districts.

4. Households' Perception of their Children's Current Educational Situation

Considering the tuition fees of a child per year, the highest percentage was recorded for "below 500,000 LBP" (about 333.3 USD) in all three districts. However, it is worth mentioning that this category was followed by "above

2,000,000 LBP” in Tripoli, whereas in Akkar and Menyeh/Danniyeh, unlike in Tripoli, tuition fees largely belonged to the “below 500,000 LBP” category and the percentages for the other categories were very negligible.

As for parents’ evaluation of the infrastructure (health and sanitation) and health conditions in their children’s schools, the results were the same in all three districts. On a scale varying from “null” to “very good”, the highest percentage was recorded for the rating “medium”.

With regard to the availability of educational facilities in their children’s schools, the percentage of parents reporting a positive answer was 61.5 per cent, 47 per cent and 64.5 per cent in Akkar, Menyeh/Danniyeh, and Tripoli, respectively. On the other hand, parents’ estimation of the availability of extra-curricular and leisure activities showed more variation. For example, positive answers were given by 59.9 per cent of parents in Tripoli, 45.4 per cent in Akkar, and 11.4 per cent in Menyeh/Danniyeh.

The percentage of families who reported the availability of transportation for their children to and from school was 72.9 per cent in Akkar, 53.3 per cent in Menyeh/Danniyeh, and 60.8 per cent in Tripoli. Transportation fees per month were mostly ranked “below 50,000 LBP/month” (about 33.3 USD) in the three districts. As for the distance separating domiciles from schools, the majority of surveyed households in all districts said their children’s schools lie within a radius of 1-10 kms of their homes.

Regarding the number of families receiving educational assistance of any kind, the percentage did not exceed 25 per cent in any of the three surveyed districts.

5. Households’ Perception of Primary Infrastructure Availability and Access

According to respondents in Akkar, the most relevant agricultural crops in their areas were tobacco, wheat, olives, and vegetables; citrus was the dominant crop in Tripoli and fruits, in Menyeh/Danniyeh.

As for the main manufacturing activity in the surveyed areas, “artisanal goods” was the most reported. The other answers were: “aluminum fabrication”, “wood fabrication”, “cement/construction”, “dairy products”, “oil products”, “food manufacturing”, “furniture”, “chemical products”, and “clothes” in each of the three surveyed districts.

The highest percentage of answers regarding power supply hours (per 24 hours) was in the “6-12 hours” category in all three districts (66.6% in Akkar, 56% in

Menyeh/Danniyeh, and 49.5% in Tripoli). For alternative power sources in case of power cuts, significant percentages of people with “no alternative” or “other” alternatives (reflecting candles or gas lamps) were particularly observed in high-altitude remote regions of Menyeh/Danniyeh and the poorest suburbs of Tripoli. The cost of these alternative power sources was generally in the “below 50,000 LBP/month” category. However, this sum is to be added to the cost of the main source of power supply.

The main sources of heating in Akkar and Menyeh/Danniyeh were wood and fuel heaters (due to the high-altitude villages), and electricity and gas in Tripoli (due to its proximity to the sea and relatively moderate temperature during the winter). Additionally, households in the poorest suburbs of Tripoli reported blankets and coal as sources of heating. Heating costs were considerably high in remote villages during the winter, due to increased fuel prices and the necessity of heating throughout the day. For instance, only 18 per cent of the surveyed households in Akkar and 17.6 per cent in Menyeh/Danniyeh reported a heating cost of “below 50,000 LBP”. By contrast, only 6 per cent of households surveyed in Tripoli reported heating costs of “above 150,000 LBP”.

In terms of transportation by household, the majority of respondents in all three districts had one car per family. Most answers regarding the distance between home and work location were in the “1-10 km” category, followed by “+30 km”, in all three districts.

Eighty-three per cent of the surveyed households in Tripoli said that health and sanitation infrastructure exist in their area, while the percentages in Akkar and Menyeh/Danniyeh were 47.5 per cent and 55.5 per cent, respectively. As for the availability of communication means in the region, Tripoli had the highest score at 72.7 per cent, followed by Akkar at 67.6 per cent and Menyeh/Danniyeh at 49.5 per cent.

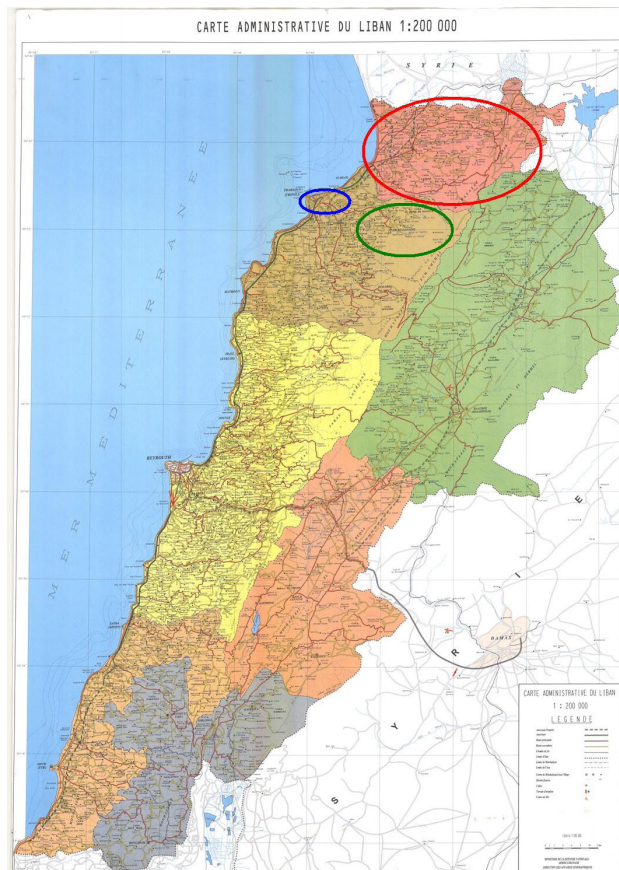
Regarding the availability of water resources in the surveyed areas, the percentage of households with available potable water was equal to or moderately higher than 50 per cent in all three districts. The main alternative was “buying water”, which cost households “below 50,000 LBP/month” in all three districts. For irrigation water, the percentage of positive answers reported was 49.5 per cent in Akkar, 45 per cent in Menyeh/Danniyeh and 59.2 per cent in Tripoli.

Methodology

The Study Population, Procedures, and Ethical Considerations

The assessment covered 2,000 households (around 10,000 individuals)¹ in three districts in Northern Lebanon: Akkar, Menyeh/Danniyeh and Tripoli (and its surroundings), based on a selection of 35 representative schools in the three sectors chosen according to the educational sector (public, private) and the socio-economic level of the community.

The map below shows the distribution of households surveyed in the assessment:



¹ The number was obtained by multiplying the number of households by the average number of children/family.

These districts were chosen according to recent statistics which show that they have the highest rates of poverty in the nation at 63.3 per cent, 63 per cent, and 57 per cent, respectively. The peripheral districts of Lebanon have known long years of neglect and marginalization due to economic development policies that mostly focused on Beirut, which eventually led to lopsided growth between the capital and its periphery. Additionally, the July war of 2006, the Nahr-El-Bared conflicts, and the sporadic incidents of violence in the suburbs of Tripoli have had a devastating effect on the northern region of Lebanon, especially in districts where many families rely on agriculture as their source of income.

The assessment aimed to do the following: gauge the perception of a sample of households on the needs of their communities and obtain statistics for basic socio-economic indicators; list barriers and constraints to accessing services in the surveyed areas and assess the cost of alternatives; and evaluate the applicability of prospective socio-economic development projects in remote local communities in Northern Lebanon.

In committing itself to the ethics of the needs assessment, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) obtained authorization for accessing public schools. Special consent was obtained from the General Directorate (GD) of Education. Questionnaires were sent to parents through their children enrolled in schools, to be returned two days later. Two surveyors were in charge of fieldwork in the three districts. They were provided with a letter from IOM to school principals and parents, as well as a copy of the letter of consent signed by the GD of Education. They passed by the schools two days later, collected the questionnaires, and submitted them to IOM. Schools were contacted on a regular basis to ensure that the questionnaires were administered. The response rate was 85.6 per cent.

Qualitative information was also collected through in-depth interviews with parents, community members, and leaders in the three districts via field visits and observations. Minutes of these visits were compiled and thematically arranged in order to be used as evidence in the report. During the data entry phase, 2,000 questionnaires were cleaned, coded and entered using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Findings

1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Sample²

Table 1-1 shows that households from the Akkar district constituted 32.6 per cent of the total sample. Households from Tripoli city and its surroundings formed the largest group in the sample at 45.7 per cent.

Table 1-1 Distribution of households by district

District	Frequency	Percentage
Akkar	646	32.6
Menyeh/Danniyeh	430	21.7
Tripoli and surroundings	904	45.7
Total	1,980	100.0

The socio-economic level of the households in the sample (based on the father's occupation and income/month) is shown in Table 1-2 and Figure 1-1.

Table 1-2: Distribution of households by father's type of occupation³

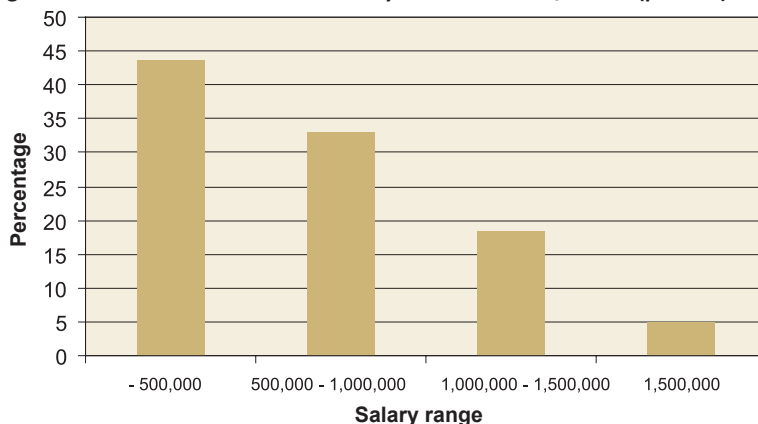
Father's job	Frequency	Percentage
Big owners/ big traders	2	0.1
High cadres	3	0.2
Liberal jobs	53	2.7
Middle traders and contractors	202	10.4
Middle cadres	37	1.9
Secondary teachers	27	1.4
Primary teachers	92	4.8
Employees	111	5.7
Artisans and popular jobs	507	26.2
Workers	252	13.0
Semi-skilled workers	13	0.7
Clergy	36	1.9
Farmers and huntsmen	175	9.1

² Discrepancies in the total number of families in the tables were due to missing answers for each question.

³ High categories include upper cadres, owners, and liberal professions (doctors, engineers, lawyers). Middle categories are comprised of free professions, middle cadres (heads of departments), secondary teachers, journalists, artists, high military ranks, and technicians. Low categories include little civil servants, primary teachers and employees (private sector), and lower military ranks. The very low categories include artisans (butcher, smith, baker, etc.), workers and semi-workers, small farmers, peasants, and the unemployed.

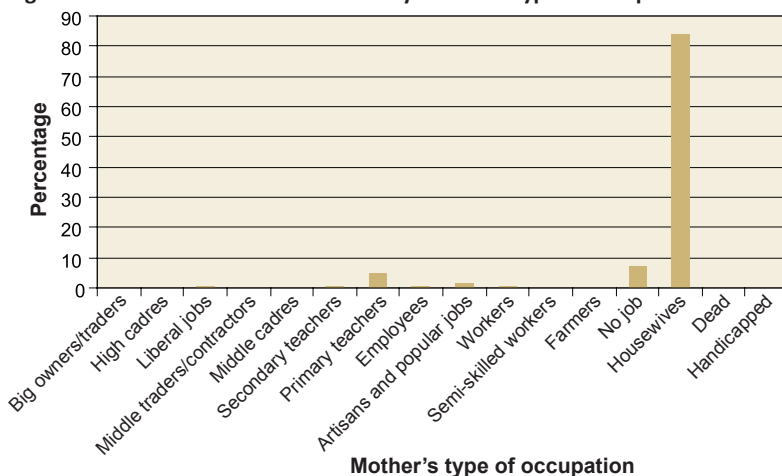
Army and security	284	14.7
Jobless	47	2.4
Technicians	17	0.9
Volunteer	2	0.1
Dead	23	1.2
Handicapped	10	0.5
Other	42	2.2
Total	1,935	100

Figure 1-1: Distribution of households by father's income/month (per LBP)



The distribution of households in the sample according to the mother's job is shown in Figure 1-2.

Figure 1-2: Distribution of households by mother's type of occupation⁴



⁴ High categories include upper cadres, owners, and liberal professions (doctors, engineers, lawyers). Middle categories are comprised of free professions, middle cadres (heads of departments), secondary teachers, journalists, artists, high military ranks, and technicians. Low categories include little civil servants, primary teachers and employees (private sector), and lower military ranks. The very low categories include artisans (butcher, smith, baker, etc.), workers and semi-workers, small farmers, peasants, and the unemployed.

Table 1-3 and 1-4 show that, with regard to the level of education of the parents, 9.5 per cent of the students had an illiterate father and 15.9 per cent had an illiterate mother. Additionally, in 4 per cent of the surveyed households, both father and mother were reported as illiterate. It is interesting to note that the percentage of mothers with university degrees was slightly higher than the figure for fathers with university degrees (7.3% and 6.9%, respectively). However, it is also noteworthy that 83.7 per cent of mothers were housewives.

Table 1-3: Distribution of households by father's level of education

Father's level of education	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	178	9.5
Primary education	793	42.1
Intermediate education	460	24.4
Secondary education	211	11.2
University education (BA, MA, PhD)	129	6.9
Technical or vocational education	68	3.6
Don't know	34	1.8
Other	9	0.5
Total	1,882	100.0

Table 1-4: Distribution of households by mother's level of education

Mother's level of education	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	303	15.9
Primary education	611	32
Intermediate education	496	26
Secondary education	294	15.4
University education (BA, MA, PhD)	140	7.3
Technical or vocational education	33	1.7
Don't know	22	1.2
Other	8	0.4
Total	1,907	100.0

Table 1-5 shows that Sunnis formed 82.5 per cent of the households sampled, while Christians of all sects made up 6.4 per cent and Alawite, 10.6 per cent.

Table 1-5: Distribution of households by religious affiliation

Religious Affiliation	Frequency	Percentage
Moslem Sunni	1,612	82.5
Moslem Shiite	9	0.5
Moslem Alawite	208	10.6
Christian Maronite	61	3.1
Christian Orthodox	62	3.2
Christian Catholic	2	0.1
Total	1,954	100.0

Concerning nationality, non-Lebanese formed 2.2 per cent of the total, whereas 0.6 per cent of the sampled households had both Lebanese and non-Lebanese members (Table 1-6).

Table 1-6: Distribution of households by nationality

Nationality	Frequency	Percentage
Lebanese	1,918	97.2
Other	43	2.2
Lebanese and other	12	0.6
Total	1,973	100.0

As for children per household, the number varied between 1 and 17 with an average of 5.3 (Figure 1-3). The average number of children enrolled in schools per household was 3.8 (Figure 1-4).

Figure 1-3: Distribution of households by number of children/household

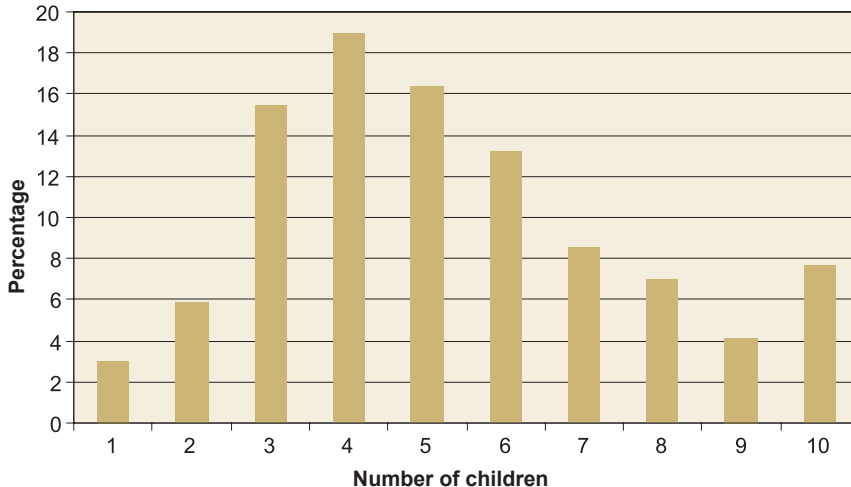
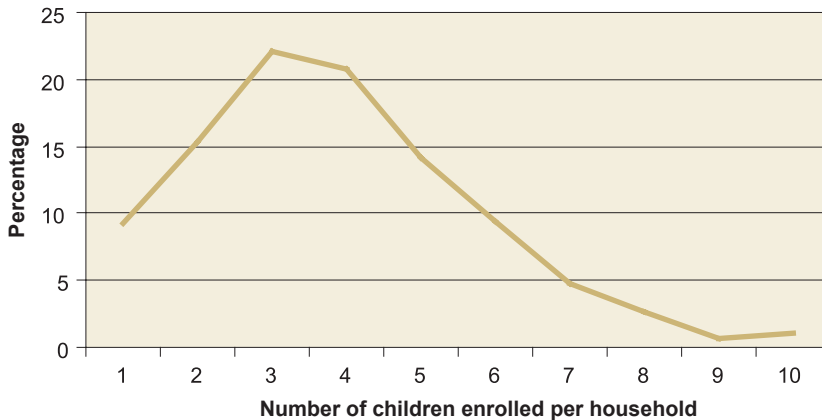


Figure 1-4: Distribution of households by number of children enrolled in school/household

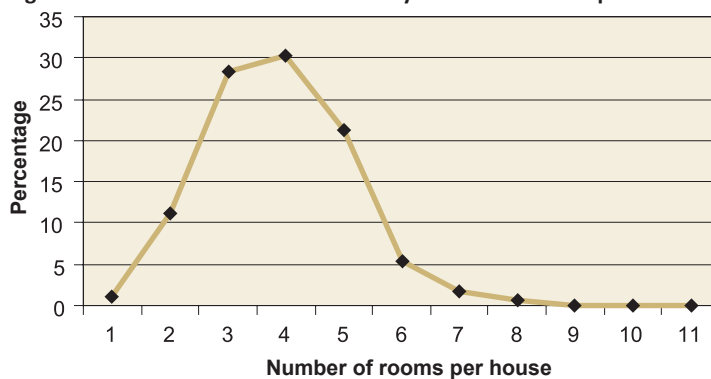


Finally, regarding living conditions, 73.9 per cent of the households surveyed owned their homes (Table 1-7), and the number of rooms per house varied between 1 and 11 with an average of 3.9 (Figure 1-5).

Table 1-7: Distribution of households by type of housing

Type of housing	Frequency	Percentage
Rented	374	20.6
Owned	1,345	73.9
Other	100	5.5
Total	1,819	100.0

Figure 1-5: Distribution of households by number of rooms per house



The results in the following sections are presented by district in order to gauge the primary needs of each district according to the specificities of each (the geographical distribution, the economic status, and the impact of the last episodes of conflict in the region).⁵

2. Households' Perception of their Current Economic Instability

Figure 1-6 shows that 40 per cent of the respondents in Akkar reported an income of below 500,000 LBP (333.33 USD) per month, which is the minimum wage in Lebanon. The percentage was 57 per cent in Menyeh/Danniyeh and 39.9 per cent in Tripoli.

Figure 1-6: Financial income of the head of the household/month per district



The figures could be considered alarming, in light of recent studies which show that the three districts have the highest rates of poverty in the nation. This is probably related to the long years of neglect that the northern regions of Lebanon have known for decades, in addition to recurring episodes of violence, which have led to loss of income for hundreds of households, especially in remote areas, that are heavily reliant on agriculture.

Results showed that households with many children had low income profiles. This pattern reveals the necessity of raising awareness of reproductive health rights in rural and low income communities, in order to enhance the quality of life of individuals and improve access to appropriate education for all children.

⁵ Numbers reported in the tables in the sections from this point forward represent the number of households and not percentages.

The relationship between the type of job and monthly income of the head of the household was not clear. The availability of work alone does not guarantee freedom from poverty if income is not sufficient to meet costs and raise the poor's standard of living to above the poverty line.

In estimating material losses, 50.4 per cent of the households in Akkar reported that they lost their source of income in the last three years. The percentages for Menyeh/Danniyeh and Tripoli were 72.8 per cent and 69.11 per cent, respectively. This was expected especially in Tripoli, due to the city's proximity to the conflict area of Nahr-el-Bared and recurring incidents of violence in poor areas surrounding the city.

The war – one of the episodes of violence that have occurred since the war of July 2006, mainly in the north of Lebanon – was the main reason for the loss of income for the majority of households in the three districts. Many households reported more than one reason as well (see Table 1-14).

Table 1-8 shows that 3.8 per cent of the surveyed households in Akkar, 7.5 per cent in Menyeh/Danniyeh, and 6.1 per cent in Tripoli received financial compensation, whereas the overall percentage (total sample) did not exceed 5 per cent. The discrepancy between the magnitude of income loss and the compensation occasionally provided may reveal the necessity of combining efforts to offer sustainable socio-economic assistance, especially in remote areas hardly connected to the main cities where alternatives are more available.

Table 1-8: Economic loss (past two years), main reasons and compensation

	Akkar	Menyeh/ Danniyeh	Tripoli	Total
Yes	313	298	602	1,213
No	308	111	269	688
Total	621	409	871	1,901
Reason for loss				
War	151	97	341	589
Displacement	11	9	26	46
Natural disasters	53	59	17	129
Other	66	41	111	218
More than one of the above	45	87	124	256
Total	326	293	619	1,238
Compensation received				
Yes	20	27	46	93
No	506	332	708	1546
Total	526	359	754	1,639

Table 1-9 shows high percentages for “loans” as an alternative source of income in all three districts. For the total sample, “loans” came first as well, followed by “parents’ and friends’ help” and “the creation of own business”. It is also noticeable that a sizeable percentage reported more than one alternative. On the other hand, the numbers were surprisingly low for “agriculture and/or fishing”, though these two are primary sources of income in most areas of Northern Lebanon. The lack of connection between the districts, as well as the lack of irrigation facilities and agricultural cooperatives, render these alternatives unviable, especially since cultivators face seasonal economic losses due to natural reasons and compensation for losses, if any, are insufficient and often come late (see Table 1-8).

Table 1-9: Alternatives adopted by communities to cope with the loss of their source of income

	Akkar	Menyeh/Danniyeh	Tripoli	Total
Savings	20	14	62	96
Parents' and friends' help	23	27	105	155
Loans	92	62	172	326
Creation of own business	48	44	57	149
Another job	9	20	28	57
Agriculture and/or fishing	35	23	4	62
No resources	24	27	34	85
Other	19	10	33	62
More than one of the above	46	37	84	167
Total	316	264	579	1,159

At present, the city of Tripoli represents a weight of population and is an important economic centre in Northern Lebanon. Over the decades, the people of Tripoli have engaged in the manufacture of textiles, jewelry and other crafts, as well as carpentry and food manufacture (sweets). Hence, as shown in Table 1-10, 70 families considered supporting “food manufacturing” as one of the most appropriate remedial steps to boost the region’s economy, and 60 families opted for “supporting artisanal goods and handcrafted manufactures”.

Table 1-10: Proposed remedial steps to boost the economy of the region

Remedial steps	Akkar	Menyeh/ Danniyeh	Tripoli
Support for food manufacturing	29	14	70
Support for artisanal goods and handcraft	11	12	60
Loans for micro businesses	26	22	88
Job opportunities in educational and health institutions	71	44	180
Support for livestock and poultry	4	2	2
Support for fishing	2		5
Support for agriculture	58	49	8
Support for food manufacturing, plus one or more of the above	218	153	238
Support for artisanal goods and handcraft, plus one or more of the above	163	82	199
Loans for micro business, plus one or more of the above	162	86	212
Job opportunities in educational and health institutions, plus one or more of the above	264	136	226
Support for livestock and poultry, plus one or more of the above	155	129	78
Support for fishing, plus one or more of the above	56	18	66
Support for agriculture, plus one or more of the above	293	200	129

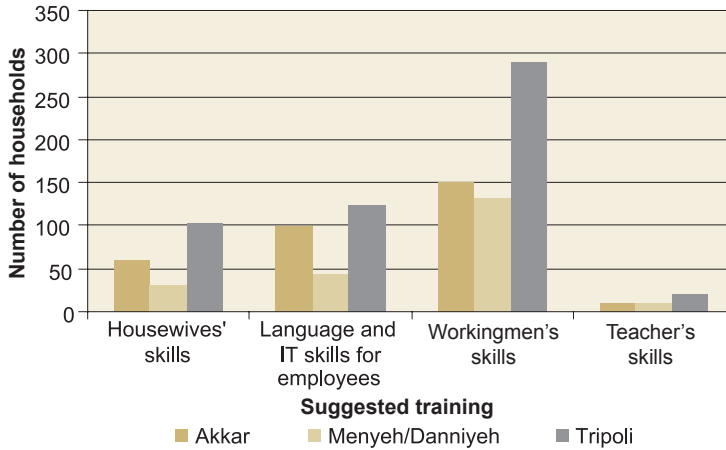
However, after long years of conflict and the expansion of foreign markets, the local market could now hardly sustain the existence and effectiveness of the traditional manufactures market. Changes in consumers' purchasing power threaten the survival of traditional industries, in particular their prosperity and strength, especially since development policies pay no special attention to this sector. Additionally, the loss of tourist sites has also contributed to the decline of traditional industries.

Lower market demand for traditional products has led artisans to shift to functional activities, raising the unemployment rate in the process. This can justify the number of families who reported "creation of jobs" as one of the most appropriate remedial steps to boost the economy of the region (see Table 1-10).

This is quite expected especially since functional positions in Lebanon are considered today as one of the most secure sources of income, providing a steady wage per month. However, the minimum wage is peculiar if we consider the living cost, especially in the cities. In line with this, 491 families out of the total sample reported "enhancing language and IT skills of employees" as a potential way to increase job opportunities or improve working conditions (see Figure 1-7).



Figure 1-7: Training to help increase job opportunities or boost working conditions



As for developing small businesses, 88 families affirmed that “ensuring micro loans” would be one of the most appropriate remedial steps to boost the economy of the region, and this can be expected due to the commercial characteristics of the city. This can eventually help increase the activities and profits of small businesses. It can be coupled with selective measures of technical assistance, such as training on basic skills in management and marketing, to help small firms formulate projects for their activities.

To enhance craft industries, an integrated approach can be implemented through several training programmes that target young people working to develop artisanal goods, with emphasis on the importance of permanently preserving the historical and cultural identity of those industries. This will lead to job creation, reduce the proportion of job seekers and raise the level of the artisanal goods sector’s contribution to gross domestic product. This will also improve the plight of low-profile job seekers who usually have to contend with low minimum wage levels, inadequate working conditions and lack of job security.

In the high-altitude villages of Menyeh/Danniyeh and Akkar, the responses mirrored those in Tripoli. The responses were for “the creation of job opportunities in health and educational institutions”, due to the relative security that a functional position can bring. However, a special emphasis was given to supporting agriculture.

This is due to the fact that remote high-altitude villages in Northern Lebanon differ from the rest of the country in terms of the following features: vast areas of land planted with fruits trees and vegetables; large number of water springs; and appropriate climate for growing most types of fruits.

The integrated measures for sustainable development could include capacity building of local labour hand cultivators and enhancing housewives' role in generating income through the following steps:

Agriculture

- Introduce modern small-scale cultivation practices (for small farmers) that aim to intensify the added value and reduce efforts and costs. Such practices include: irrigation; fertilization; use of seeds and organic products; support for post-harvest technologies, including those for handling and storage operations that take place in the fields and for storing crops; and development of conservation techniques that conform to international standards and specifications.
- Support bee-keeping practices in rural areas.
- Launch an integrated programme for small communities of farmers to form cooperatives and boost the individual participation of members in such communities, as well as establish linkages between cooperatives, stakeholders and companies from the industrial sector.

Food manufacturing and small business skills

- Facilitate the expansion of local products so they can compete better with imported products.
- Equip housewives with skills to make traditional products such as textiles, jam, pickles and dairy products, and educate them about modern rules of safety. Enabling housewives to work from home will provide households with an additional source of income and make them less dependent on seasonal agriculture.
- Address the needs of local and foreign markets, and explore new markets by participating in local and international exhibitions and technical conferences.

As for supporting poultry and livestock, the number of positive answers was low, most probably because modern farming has replaced traditional means. In addition, the avian flu threat over the past few years had forced farmers to kill thousands of birds.

In terms of training to help increase job opportunities or boost existing ones, special emphasis was given to “developing the basic skills of working men” in all three districts (150 families in Akkar, 131 in Menyeh/Danniyeh and 291 in Tripoli). This can be of great importance in remote high-altitude villages that depend on seasonal agriculture and are forced to look for alternative sources of income during the off-season in order to survive. Cultivators face natural

disasters (rain, snow and floods) at least once a year and are at high risk of losing their agricultural crops (see Table 1-8), with minimal chances of getting compensation for their losses.

Developing housewives' skills was emphasized in Tripoli (102 families) more than in Akkar (59 families) and Menyeh/Danniyeh (30 families), due to traditional gender roles in remote areas that may prohibit women from seeking jobs outside the house. In line with this, 124 families in Tripoli endorsed enhancing the language and IT skills of employees, due to the nature of employment in a commercial city such as Tripoli (see Table 1-17). Nevertheless, Lebanese workers still face competition from migrant workers, who tend to work more for lower wages.

Table 1-11 shows that overall, 11.9 per cent of the households were receiving material assistance at the time of the survey (the figures were 13.3%, 13.8%, and 10% for Akkar, Menyeh/Danniyeh, and Tripoli, respectively). This illustrates that most in-kind assistance is selectively granted and provided for electoral campaigns and other special purposes. They are far from targeting people who are most in need.

Table 1-11: Number of families receiving material assistance

	Akkar	Menyeh/Danniyeh	Tripoli	Total
Yes	82	58	88	228
No	534	359	784	1,677
Total	616	418	872	1,906

3. Households' Perception of Available Primary Health Care Services

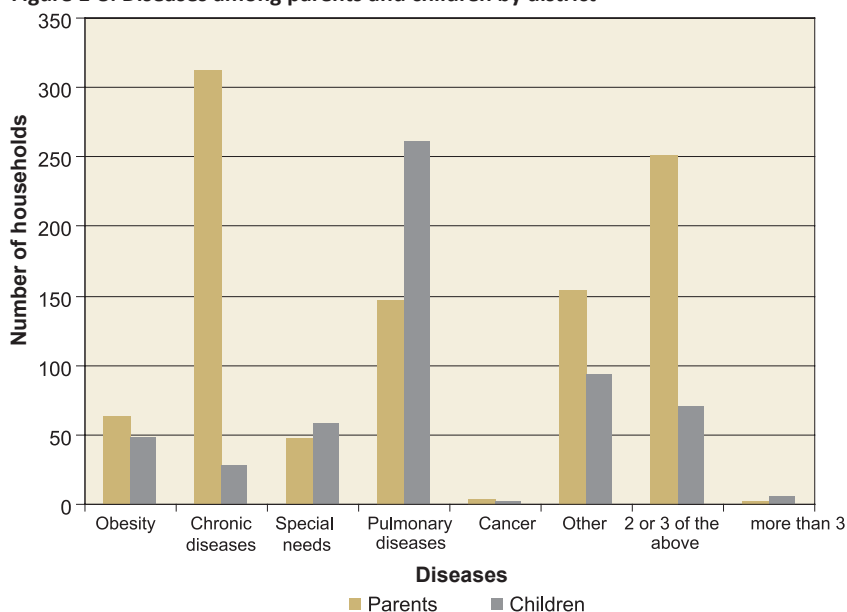
Health care systems include treatments as well as prevention, diagnosis, continuing care, rehabilitation and palliative care.

The quantitative measure of the health indicators of the family is used to gauge the level of need for primary care services. It is assumed that the higher the measured indicator is in a particular service area, the greater is the need for primary care services. While the approach may not be sufficient to capture all the dimensions of need, it allows for easy and objective analysis of available services and their efficiency.

It is well-documented that socio-economic status is a significant contributing factor to variations in health. It is linked to higher rates of chronic illness in the most disadvantaged communities.

Recurring diseases among parents in all three districts were chronic diseases such as diabetes, renal failure, and cardiopathies, which can be attributed to aging. Pulmonary and respiratory diseases were the most common among children in all three districts. This can be due to a variety of reasons: poor living conditions (humidity and lack of heating in domiciles), lingering colds or flu contamination during the winter season, which are often underestimated by parents or treated in traditional ways. Diseases reported among parents and children are shown in Figure 1-8.

Figure 1-8: Diseases among parents and children by district



In traditional communities, parents often hold the view that strong children grow naturally, and preventive medicine is not crucial for the healthy development of a child. Cultural values may promote natural sources of immunization in food or milk for example, but rarely refer to medical means of prevention like vaccination. In Akkar, 75.8 per cent of the respondents said that their children had received all their vaccines. The figures for Tripoli and Menyeh/Danniyeh were 79.9 per cent and 66.5 per cent, respectively. In line with this, the percentage of families whose children have medical records was 65.9 per cent in Akkar; 59.2 per cent in Menyeh/Danniyeh; and 74.7 per cent in Tripoli (see Table 1-12).

Table 1-12: Number of households where children had vaccinations and medical records

	Akkar	Menyeh/ Danniyeh	Tripoli	Total
The child received all his vaccines				
Yes	467	267	702	1436
No	149	134	179	462
Total	616	401	881	1,898
The child has a medical record				
Yes	404	237	647	1,288
No	209	163	219	591
Total	613	400	866	1,879

Table 1-13 shows the frequency of children’s visits to the dentist. In Akkar, 31 per cent of the surveyed households reported visiting the dentist “more than once per year”, whereas the highest percentage of responses was for “once per year” in Menyeh/Danniyeh (28.8%) and Tripoli (27.6%).

Table 1-13: Children’s visits to the dentist and the ophthalmologist by household

	Akkar	Menyeh/ Danniyeh	Tripoli	Total
Visit to the dentist				
Never	124	97	216	437
Once per year	176	117	242	535
More than once per year	192	94	209	495
Whenever needed	125	97	207	429
Total	617	405	874	1,896
Visit to the ophthalmologist				
Never	244	184	316	744
Once per year	161	84	240	485
More than once per year	84	48	113	245
Whenever needed	107	83	172	362

The frequency of visits to the ophthalmologist was similar in all three districts. The highest percentage of responses was recorded for “never” as follows: 40.9 per cent in Akkar, 46.1 per cent in Menyeh/Danniyeh and 37.5 per cent in Tripoli. Overall, 40.5 per cent of the sample reported never having visited an ophthalmologist.

Table 1-14 shows that 70.7 per cent of the surveyed households in Akkar stated that they visit general health practitioners in case there was a somatic complaint in the family. The percentage was 54.6 per cent in Menyeh/Danniyeh and 73.6 per cent in Tripoli. For those who do not visit general health practitioners, the main reason reported in all three districts was the high cost of health services in the surveyed areas, where people often refer to pharmacists’ advice instead of going for medical consultation. The lack of public health services in the surveyed areas was also a reason why people do not consult doctors in case of pain.

Table 1-14: Number of families who consult GH practitioners, reasons for not consulting GH practitioners and availability of GHC services in the area

	Akkar	Menyeh/ Danniyeh	Tripoli	Total
Consult with GH practitioner when needed				
Yes	444	229	649	1,322
No	184	190	233	607
Total	628	419	882	1,929
Reasons for not consulting				
High cost	77	44	127	248
No medical services in the area	21	39	7	67
Traditional healing	9	13	6	28
Fear of doctors	1	1	5	7
Seek advice from pharmacist	33	36	78	147
Other	14	9	15	38
Availability of GHC services in the area				
Yes	297	145	441	883
No	323	271	435	1,029
Total	620	416	876	1,912

With regard to the availability of medical services, 47.9 per cent of the households in Akkar reported that PHC (primary health care) services were available in their areas. The figures for Menyeh/Danniyeh and Tripoli were 34.8 per cent and 50.3 per cent, respectively.

These findings suggest that there is currently a lack of specific local knowledge in this area, but there is potential for development.

As shown in Table 1-15, the percentage of beneficiaries of any kind of medical or social assistance in the surveyed areas did not exceed 15 per cent in all three districts.

Table 1-15: Number of families receiving socio-medical assistance

	Akkar	Menyeh/ Danniyeh	Tripoli	Total
Yes	78	62	134	274
No	553	362	753	1,668
Total	631	424	887	1,942

To underpin the context of health needs assessment, it is relevant to consider health determinants such as personal, social, cultural, economic, and environmental factors that influence the health status of individuals or populations, as well as services available locally such as education, social services, transport, and leisure.

Of the specific recommendations, those particularly relevant to reducing health inequalities are the following:

- Reduce food poverty in vulnerable populations, including expectant mothers, young children, and older people, by improving livelihoods.
- Improve awareness campaigns that aim to:
 - prevent and reduce obesity (for the existing link between obesity and most chronic diseases);
 - promote vaccination in early childhood;
 - promote sexual-health rights and family-planning measures in disadvantaged communities;
 - promote eye care and oral hygiene in elementary schools;
 - boost social and emotional support for parents and children through psychosocial support for vulnerable populations in disadvantaged circumstances.
- Facilitate access to basic sanitation infrastructure and potable water in schools.
- Consider vulnerable groups in needs assessment, resource allocation, and health care planning and provision.

4. Households' Perception of their Children's Current Educational Situation

Table 1-16 shows a child's tuition fees per year. The highest percentages were recorded for "below 500,000 LBP" in all three districts. However, it is worth mentioning that this category was followed by "above 2,000,000 LBP" in Tripoli, whereas in Akkar and Menyeh/Danniyeh, unlike in Tripoli, tuition fees largely belonged to the "below 500,000 LBP" category and the percentages for the other categories were very negligible.

Table 1-16: Tuition fees per student per year

	Akkar	Menyeh/ Danniyeh	Tripoli	Total
-500,000 LBP	214	193	371	778
500,000-1,000,000 LBP	167	96	159	422
1,000,000-2,000,000 LBP	130	63	78	271
+2,000,000 LBP	96	52	233	381
Total	607	404	841	1,852

As for parents' evaluation of the infrastructure (health and sanitation) and health conditions in their children's schools, the pattern was the same in all three districts. The highest percentage was recorded for the rating "medium" on a scale varying from "null" to "very good" (see Figures 1-9 and 1-10).

Figure 1-9: Parents' evaluation of infrastructure in their children's school

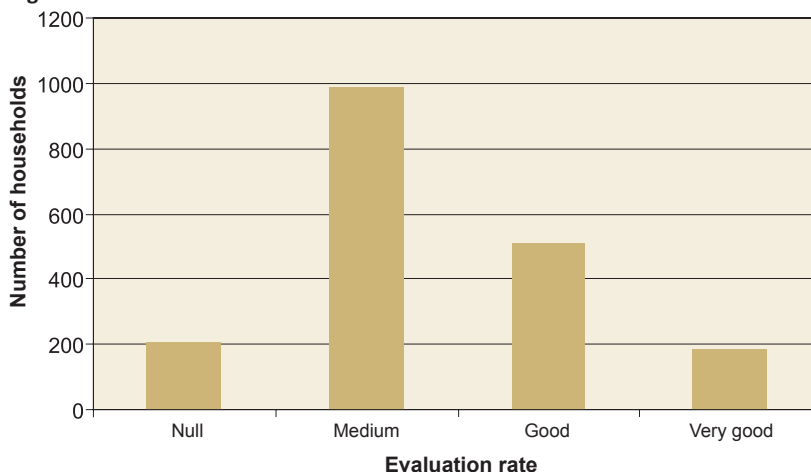
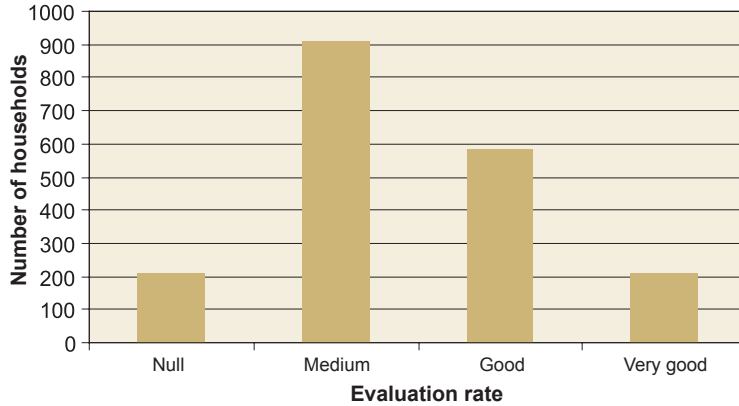


Figure 1-10: Parents' evaluation of health conditions in their children's school



Figures 1-11 and 1-12 show parents' estimation of the availability of learning facilities in their children's schools. The percentage of parents reporting a positive answer was 61.5 per cent, 47 per cent and 64.5 per cent in Akkar, Menyeh/Danniyeh, and Tripoli, respectively. As for the availability of extra-curricular and leisure activities, parents' views were more varied. For instance, positive answers were given by 59.9 per cent of respondents in Tripoli, 45.4 per cent in Akkar, and 11.4 per cent in Menyeh/Danniyeh.

Figure 1-11: Parents' evaluation of the availability of learning facilities in their children's school

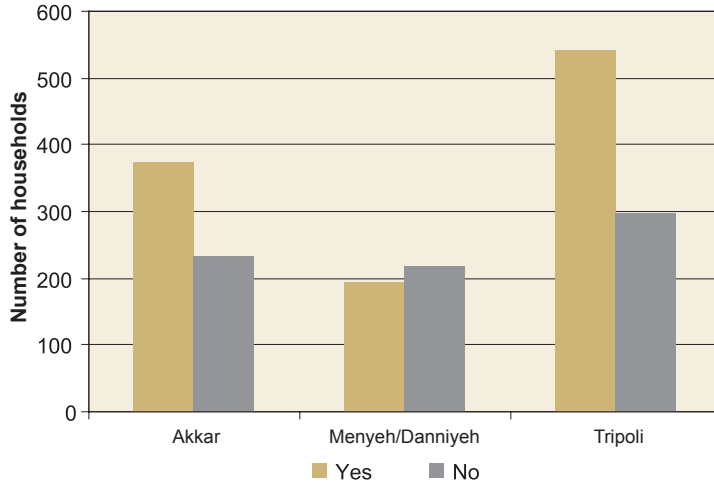
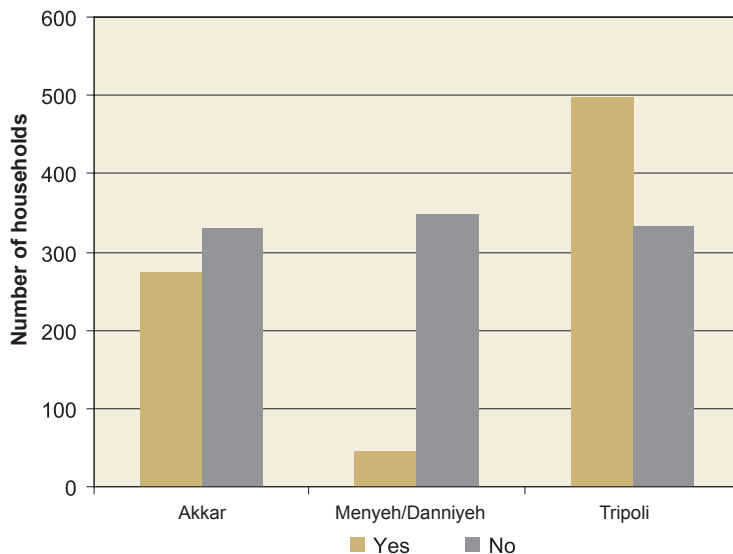


Figure 1-12: Parents' evaluation of the availability of extra-curricular and leisure activities in their children's school



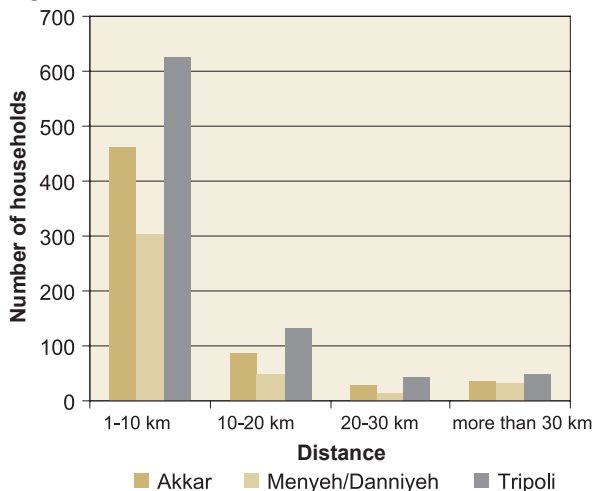
The percentage of families that reported the availability of transportation means for their children to and from school was 72.9 per cent in Akkar, 53.3 per cent in Menyeh/Danniyeh and 60.8 per cent in Tripoli. Transportation fees per month were mostly below 50,000 LBP/month in all three districts (see Table 1-17).

Table 1-17: Parents' evaluation of the availability and cost of transportation in their children's school

	Akkar	Menyeh/ Danniyeh	Tripoli	Total
Availability				
Yes	456	224	531	1,211
No	169	196	342	707
Total	625	420	873	1,918
Cost				
Free	59	78	150	287
-50,000 LBP	341	195	341	877
+50,000 LBP	190	102	280	572
Total	590	375	771	1,736

Regarding the distance separating domiciles from school, the majority of surveyed households in all three districts said their children's schools were within a radius of 1-10 kms of their homes (see Figure 1-13).

Figure 1-13: Distance between home and school



The percentage of families receiving educational assistance of any kind did not exceed 25 per cent in any of the three surveyed districts. Assistance was mostly focused on army members (see Table 1-18).

Table 1-18: Number of families receiving educational assistance

	Akkar	Menyeh/ Danniyeh	Tripoli	Total
Yes	147	92	137	376
No	472	307	737	1,516
Total	619	399	874	1,892

Of the specific recommendations, those particularly relevant to providing educational opportunities for every child are the following:

- Support the rehabilitation of public and subsidized schools in disadvantaged rural communities.
- Provide learning materials and school equipment to low-profile schools.
- Support local capacity building for ongoing educational improvement using a culturally appropriate approach:
 - Support existing capacity building for teachers and instructors in remote rural areas.
 - Bring together educators and administrators across the region for learning, sharing, and mentoring.
- Provide psychosocial support for disabled, disadvantaged, or brilliant students.

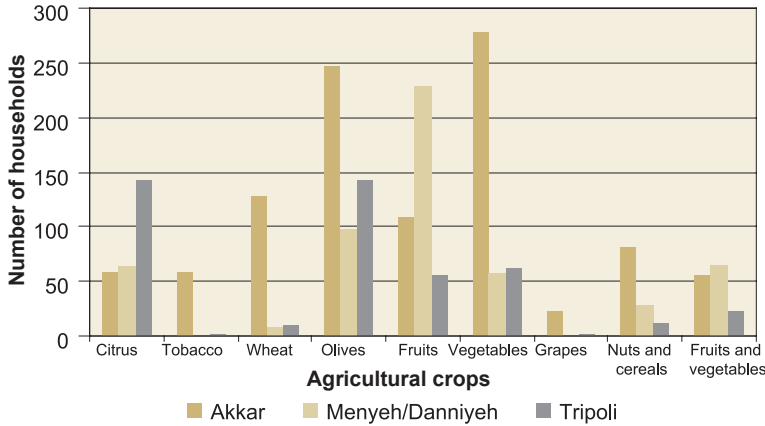
- Support programmes with differentiated curriculum and instruction to promote higher achievement of underachieving dropout students and inclusion of students with disabilities with their non-disabled peers.
- Promote gender equity in access to school in rural traditional communities.
- Facilitate guidance for elementary school students toward vocational learning and training or the academic path, depending on their level of performance and expectations; provide career-planning guidance for high school students in accordance with opportunities available in the local job market.



5. Households' Perception of Primary Infrastructure Availability and Access

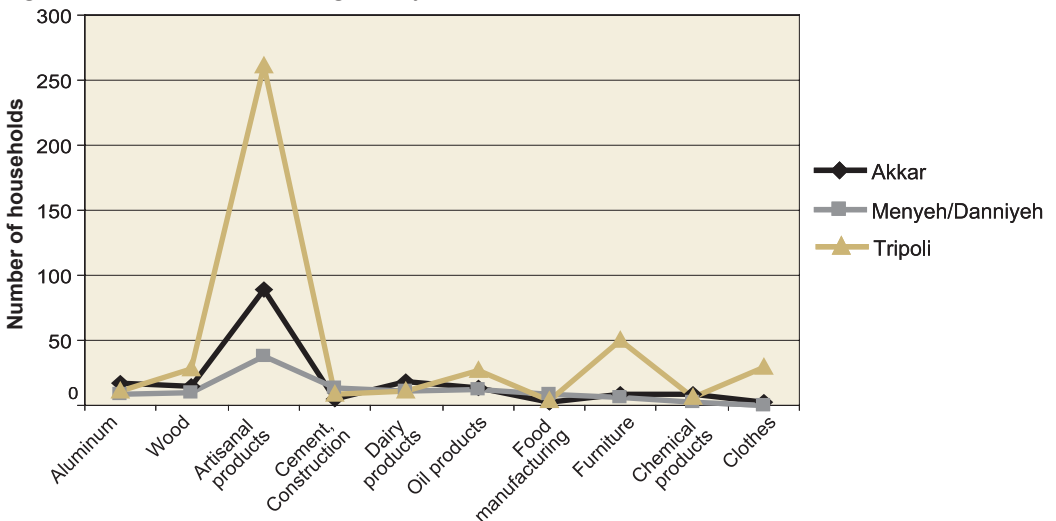
Figure 1-14 shows that the most relevant agricultural crops for respondents in Akkar were tobacco, wheat, olives and vegetables. In Tripoli, the dominant crop was citrus; in Menyeh/Danniyeh, it was fruits. These answers were expected and consistent with existing types of agriculture for which these districts were known.

Figure 1-14: Main agricultural crops by district



Artisanal goods were the main manufacturing activity in all three districts. The rest of the answers were distributed among “aluminum fabrication”, “wood fabrication”, “cement/construction”, “dairy products”, “oil products”, “food manufacturing”, “furniture”, “chemical products” and “clothes” in each of the three surveyed districts as shown in Figure 1-15.

Figure 1-15: Main manufactured goods by district



Findings related to dominant agriculture or traditional manufactures in the surveyed areas were consistent with the options cited by respondents when asked about the best steps to take to boost the region's economy.

These findings show the importance of revitalizing the agricultural sector and traditional industries in peripheral districts, to help stabilize communities and curb the migration of jobseekers to the capital and other big cities. This will establish a relative equilibrium in the development process between the capital and its periphery.

In the three districts, most respondents reported that power supply was available 6-12 hours a day. The figures were 66.6 per cent, 56 per cent and 49.5 per cent in Akkar, Menyeh/Danniyeh, and Tripoli, respectively (see Table 1-19).

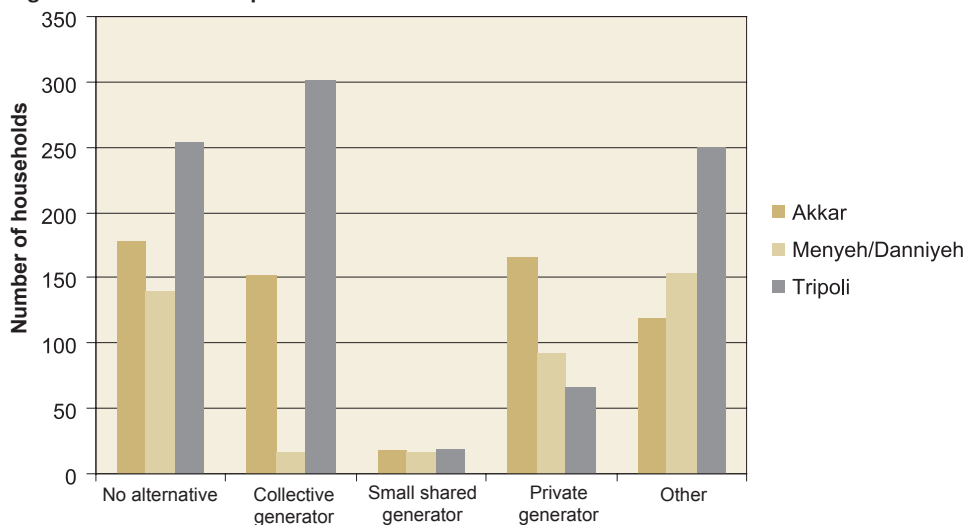
Table 1-19: Power supply per 24 hours

	Akkar	Menyeh/ Danniyeh	Tripoli	Total
-6 hours	130	82	78	290
6-12 hours	418	232	430	1,080
+12 hours	79	100	359	538
Total	627	414	868	1,909

In case of power cuts, collective generators were the most popular alternative source in Akkar and Tripoli (see Figure 1-16). However, a sizeable percentage of people reported having no alternative or using other alternatives such as reflecting candles or gas lamps. This was particularly true in the remote high-altitude regions of Menyeh/Danniyeh and the poorest suburbs of Tripoli. The results were consistent with findings from our field observation, which revealed that entire neighbourhoods in some communities lacked alternative power sources.



Figure 1-16: Alternative power sources



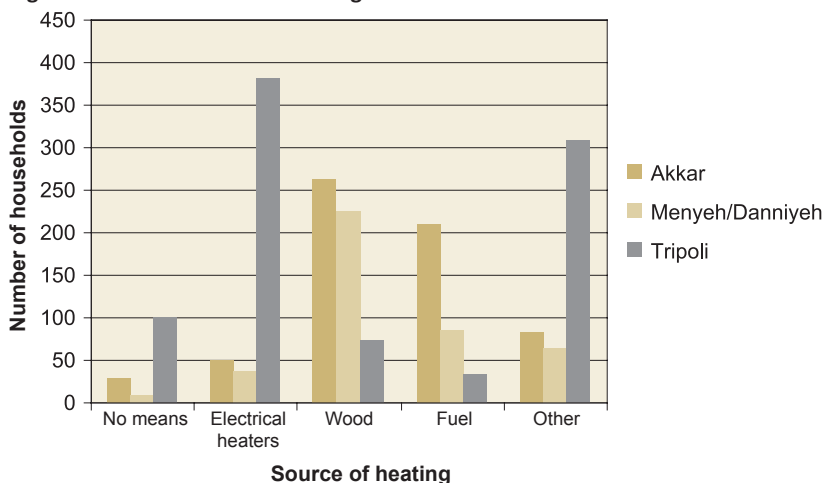
As shown in Table 1-20, alternative sources generally cost below 50,000 LBP/month in the areas surveyed. However, this sum is to be added to the cost of the main source of power supply.

Table 1-20: Cost of alternative power sources

	Akkar	Menyeh/Danniyeh	Tripoli	Total
-50,000 LBP	160	114	233	507
50,000-100,000 LBP	120	34	188	342
+100,000 LBP	47	14	20	81
Total	327	162	441	930

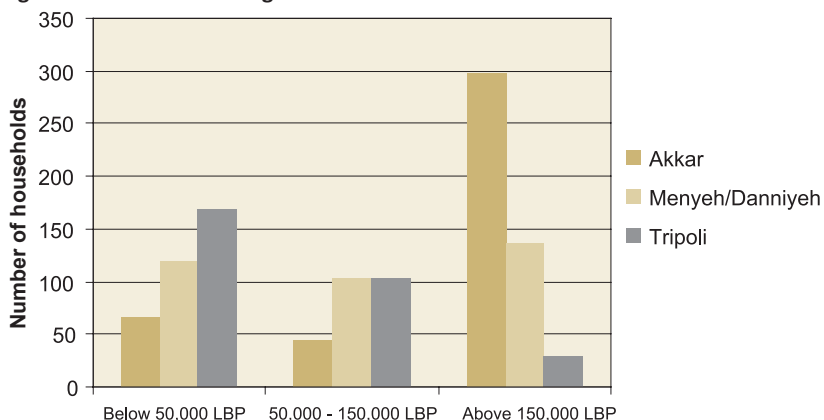
The main sources of heating in Akkar and Menyeh/Danniyeh were expectedly wood and fuel heaters (due to the high-altitude villages), and electricity and gas in Tripoli (due to its proximity to the sea and relatively moderate temperature during the winter). In addition, a significant proportion of households in the poorest suburbs of Tripoli reported using blankets and coal as heating sources (see Figure 1-17).

Figure 1-17: Main source of heating



The cost of heating is considerably high in remote villages particularly during the winter, due to higher fuel costs and the necessity of heating throughout the day. For instance, only 18 per cent of the surveyed households in Akkar, and 17.6 per cent in Menyeh/Danniyeh, reported costs of “below 50,000 LBP”, whereas only 6 per cent of the households surveyed in Tripoli had answers of “above 150,000 LBP” (see Figure 1-18).

Figure 1-18: Cost of heating



Of the specific recommendations, the distribution of non-food items (NFI), such as winterization items (blankets and heaters) and electricity generators is particularly important to providing electricity and heating resources for disadvantaged households.

As for the availability of transportation by household, the majority of respondents reported “one car/family” in all three districts (see Table 1-21).

Table 1-21: Transportation means

	Akkar	Menyeh/ Danniyeh	Tripoli	Total
No transportation means	148	131	371	650
One car	410	211	453	1074
Two or more cars	56	51	56	163
Other	16	20	6	42
Total	630	413	886	1929

Table 1-22 shows respondents’ estimation of the distance between their home and work. Surprisingly, most of the answers were in the “1-10 km” category in all three districts, followed by “+30 km” in all three districts as well.

Table 1-22: Distance between home and work

	Akkar	Menyeh/ Danniyeh	Tripoli	Total
1-10 km	246	124	419	789
10-20 km	64	48	108	220
20-30 km	43	37	60	140
+30 km	163	136	177	476
Total	516	345	764	1,625

Eighty-three per cent of the surveyed households in Tripoli said that health and sanitation infrastructure exist in their area, while the percentages for Akkar and Menyeh/Danniyeh were 47.5 per cent and 55.5 per cent, respectively (see Figure 1-19).

Figure 1-19: Availability of infrastructure (health and sanitation)

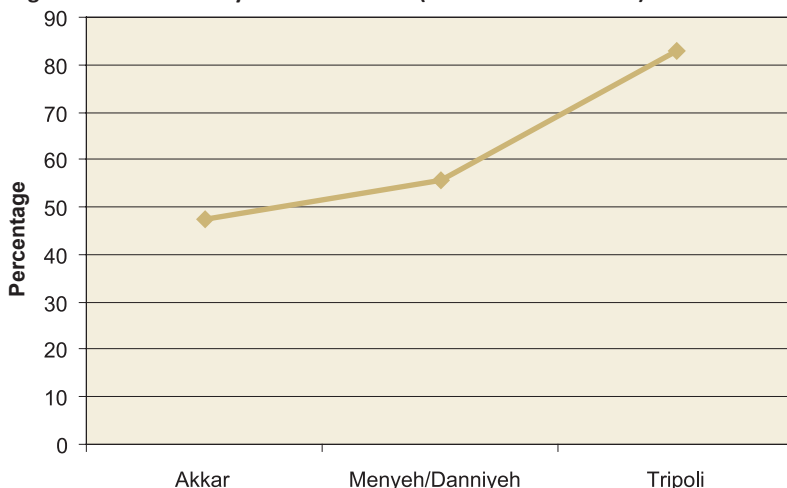
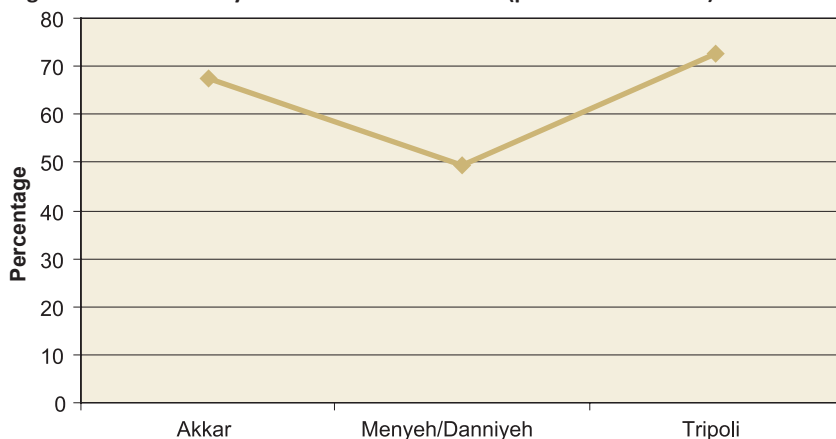


Figure 1-20 shows that with regard to the availability of communication means (phone and Internet) in the region, the highest percentage was reported in Tripoli (72.7%). The figures were 67.6 per cent and 49.5 per cent for Akkar and Menyeh/Danniyeh, respectively.

Figure 1-20: Availability of communication means (phone and Internet)



The percentage of households that reported the availability of potable water in their surroundings was equal to or moderately exceeded 50 per cent in all three districts (see Figure 1-21).

Figure 1-21: Availability of potable water

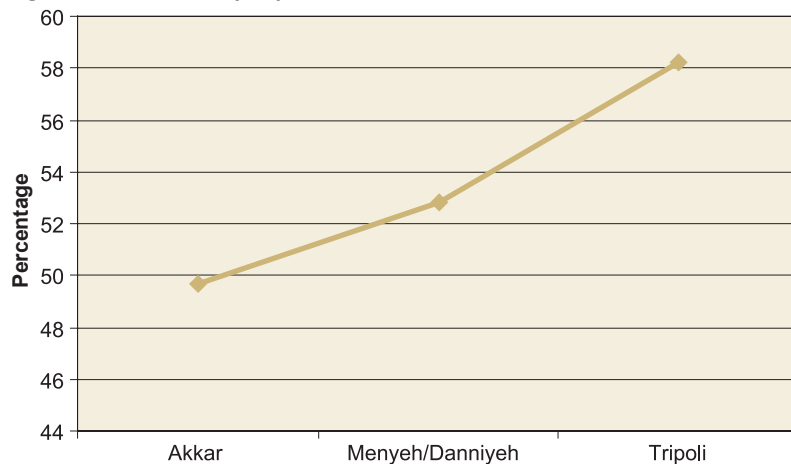


Table 1-23 shows that the main alternative was “buying water”. This costs most households below 50,000 LBP/month in all three districts, as reflected in Table 1-24.

Table 1-23: Alternative sources of potable water

	Akkar	Menyeh/ Danniyeh	Tripoli	Total
No alternatives	26	21	43	90
Buying water	150	125	282	557
Purifying through filters	64	27	74	165
Other	127	63	68	258
Total	367	236	467	1,070

Table 1-24: Cost of alternative sources of potable water

	Akkar	Menyeh/ Danniyeh	Tripoli	Total
Below 50,000 LBP	112	110	135	357
50,000-100,000 LBP	39	22	32	93
Above 100,000 LBP	41	18	35	94
Total	192	150	202	544

Regarding the availability of irrigation water in the surroundings, the percentage of positive answers was 49.5 per cent in Akkar, 45 per cent in Menyeh/Danniyeh, and 59.2 per cent in Tripoli (see Table 1-25).

Table 1-25: Availability of irrigation water

	Akkar	Menyeh/ Danniyeh	Tripoli	Total
Yes	305	188	403	896
No	311	229	278	818
Total	616	417	681	1,714

Of the specific recommendations, those of particular relevance to providing better water resources for remote peripheral districts of Lebanon are the following:

- Provide technical assistance in the management of irrigation water; install distribution pipes, water pumps, and storage tanks to accommodate the resource needs of the community and ensure the best crop yield.
- Provide assets for potable water and guidance for its management, which will result in better performance and lower cost at the community level.
- Raise awareness and encourage the wise and productive use of natural resources (potable and irrigation water).



Conclusion and Recommendations

Supported by funds from the Government of Greece, this needs assessment aimed at documenting the living conditions of the residents of 2,000 households in three districts in Northern Lebanon (Akkar, Menyeh/Danniyeh, and Tripoli and its suburbs), in an effort to explore opportunities for their improvement. For this central purpose, a comprehensive assessment was carried out between November and December, 2008, especially taking into account the conditions and demands of the communities evaluated.

This report presented demographic, socio-economic, educational, and health status information that could be used to identify areas where targeted interventions and policy changes may have the greatest impact.

The assessment mainly aimed to do the following: gauge the perception of a sample of households on the needs of their communities and obtain statistics of basic socio-economic indicators; list barriers and constraints for accessing services in the surveyed areas and assess the cost of alternatives; and evaluate the applicability of prospective socio-economic development projects in remote local communities in Northern Lebanon.

Considering the findings of the assessment, the situation may seem predictable at first glance; it is probably related to the long years of neglect experienced by the northern regions of Lebanon, as well as the sporadic incidents of violence following the July 2006 War and recurring episodes of unrest in Tripoli and its suburbs. Results showed that the war was the main reason for the loss of income for the majority of households in the three districts. The discrepancy between the magnitude of loss and the compensation occasionally provided reveals the necessity of integrating efforts for sustainable socio-economic assistance, especially in remote areas hardly connected to main cities, where alternatives are more available.

As a consequence, one can easily predict new schemes of labour migration within the northern region of Lebanon or towards the capital, with thousands of jobseekers obliged to accept low wage levels, as well as inadequate working conditions and lack of job security.

Several recommendations were derived from the findings of the assessment and sorted in an integrated approach for planning sustainable community development.

The integrated measures for sustainable development can include capacity building of the local labour hand and enhancement of housewives' role in generating income, by supporting the development of comprehensive plans to activate and support the existing initiatives of municipalities and Social Development Centres in the local communities:

Preservation of traditional industries

- Enhance craft industries through an integrated approach that includes professional training programmes, basic business skills programmes, replacement of assets, and small loans, thereby emphasizing the importance of permanently preserving the historical and cultural identity of such industries.
- Facilitate the expansion of local products so they can compete better with imported products.

Agriculture

- Introduce modern small-scale cultivation practices (for small farmers) that aim to enhance the added value and reduce efforts and costs. Such practices include: irrigation; fertilization; the use of seeds and organic products; support for post-harvest technologies, including those for handling and storage operations that take place in the fields and for storing crops; and the development of conservation techniques that conform to international standards and specifications.
- Support bee-keeping practices in rural areas.
- Introduce an integrated programme for communities of small farmers to form cooperatives and boost the individual participation of members in such communities, as well as establish linkages between cooperatives, stakeholders and companies from the industrial sector.

Food manufacturing

- Equip housewives with skills to make traditional products such as textiles, jam, pickles and dairy products, and educate them about modern rules of safety. Enabling housewives to work from home will provide households with an additional source of income and make them less dependent on seasonal agriculture.
- Facilitate the expansion of products in local and foreign markets, and explore new markets by exhibiting in local and international exhibitions and technical conferences.

Support for the public health sector

- Reduce food poverty in vulnerable populations, including expectant mothers, young children, and older people, by improving livelihoods.
- Improve awareness campaigns that aim to:
 - prevent and reduce obesity (for the existing link between obesity and most chronic diseases);
 - promote vaccination in early childhood;
 - promote sexual-health rights and family-planning measures in disadvantaged communities;
 - promote eye care and oral hygiene in elementary schools;
 - boost social and emotional support for parents and children through psychosocial support for vulnerable populations in disadvantaged circumstances.
- Facilitate access to basic sanitation infrastructure and potable water in schools.
- Consider vulnerable groups in needs assessment, resource allocation, and health care planning and provision.

Support for the educational sector

- Support the rehabilitation of public schools and subsidized schools in disadvantaged rural communities.
- Provide learning materials and school equipment for low-profile schools.
- Support local capacity building for ongoing educational improvement using a culturally appropriate approach:
 - Support existing capacity building for teachers and instructors in remote rural areas.
 - Bring together educators and administrators across the region for learning, sharing, and mentoring.
- Provide psychosocial support for disabled, disadvantaged, or brilliant students.
- Support programmes with differentiated curriculum and instruction to promote higher achievement of underachieving dropout students and inclusion of students with disabilities with their non-disabled peers.
- Promote gender equity in access to school in rural traditional communities.
- Facilitate guidance for elementary school students toward vocational learning and training or the academic path, depending on their level of performance and their expectations; provide career-planning guidance for high school students in accordance with the opportunities available in the local job market.

Support for existing infrastructure

- Carry out Rapid Needs Assessments on the basic economic needs of disadvantaged communities, considering the available resources and alternatives.
- Distribute NFI such as winterization items (blankets and heaters) and electricity generators.
- Provide technical assistance in the management of irrigation water; install distribution pipes, water pumps, and storage tanks to accommodate the resource needs of the community and ensure the best crop yield.
- Provide assets for potable water and guidance for their management, which will result in better performance and lower cost at the community level.
- Raise awareness and encourage the wise and productive use of natural resources (potable and irrigation water).



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