



جمعية إنماء القدرات في الريف

Association for the Development of Rural Capacities

STRATEGIC PLAN 2024–2027

Introduction

ADR is a Lebanese NGO that was established in 1998 with the goal of developing human and natural resources in the rural areas of Lebanon through helping social actors to acquire the knowledge and capabilities necessary to the enhancement of their lives. ADR has four components namely, Agricultural, Micro Credit, Vocational Training and Social Services.

ADR's vision is to be an active part of the institutional network that provides developmental, environmental and humanitarian services and participates in improving social and economic conditions in the country as a whole, and especially in the South.

To achieve this, ADR has the mission to support and build the capacities of marginalized people through social and economic development projects. In this context, ADR designs and implements a variety of projects based on the needs of local communities, especially in Southern Lebanon.

ADR aims to provide access to proper training and financial resources that can help local communities improve their skills and capabilities in order to achieve a sustainable livelihood and increase their financial independence. In particular, ADR helps local communities by giving them access to training, information and financial services.

Since its creation, ADR has always encouraged the promotion and establishment of community associations, as well as an active dialogue between local populations and other potential public and private organizations (e.g. cooperatives, NGO's, universities, financial institutions, international organizations, etc.). ADR focuses particularly on weak and marginalized groups including women, youth, fishermen, small farmers, crafts men and women.

More recently, ADR has increasingly focused on environmental issues and projects that help local populations develop skills that integrate eco-friendly aspects, to attain a more sustainable environment and preserve natural resources. ADR also endeavors to make use of its particular position to realize synergies in this area, along the principles of the circular economy.



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Context

In the past few years, Lebanon witnessed very difficult and enduring developments that deeply impacted economic and social conditions in the country. This started with a severe financial crisis that led to the default of the Lebanese state, and consequently to a sharp depreciation of the local currency that was accompanied by an almost stoppage of all economic activity at one point, leading to a shrinkage in GDP in 2020 to less than half its level in 2019. This sharp deterioration in the economy heavily impacted most sectors and institutions as well as households and gave a heavy blow to economic activity and consequently to the social fabric and welfare of the country.

The micro-credit sector was also hardly hit as a result of the crisis. As at end 2023, it had lost two thirds of its portfolio compared to pre-crisis levels, over 80% of its bank deposits in nominal terms (before the withdrawal haircut) and almost two thirds of its employees who do not exceed 500 today.

Despite this, ADR did not cease its activities and continued to participate in a large array of activities with local and international entities to help local communities and support them to face new and existing challenges. ADR engaged in a variety of projects in the past few years in all its fields of expertise. These included an active involvement and participation in a wide array of sectors including small farming, food processing businesses, small businesses, in particular women and youth projects.

Recently, ADR partake in a multi-phase program called AFDAL that aims to enhance production and business capacities of small farmers and improve skills and capacities of vulnerable individuals in food processing and retail. Last year, ADR entered in a 4-year project, in partnership with FPS and AIDA, that aims at economic strengthening and social stability of vulnerable local and displaced communities in Southern Lebanon.

In addition, ADR continues to pursue its contribution to environmental projects, by engaging in activities that ensure effective management and governance of ecological sites to preserve biodiversity and protect natural resources. To this effect, ADR is currently engaged in the Bioconnect project that aims at ensuring the effective management of Protected Areas in Lebanon, where ADR's role is mainly focused on the Protected Area of Tyre.



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Today, the war on Gaza and the related warfare on the borders of southern Lebanon present an additional challenge to pursue our goals and mission in this part of the country where more than 100,000 people are displaced from the villages directly affected by the conflict. However, this also prompts ADR to expand its social mission by building on its knowledge and presence in this field to offer social and humanitarian services to the needy and displaced population, by collaborating with local municipalities and international stakeholders in order to effectively provide for the growing needs in this area.

SWOT analysis

One of the main challenges facing ADR in conducting its day-to-day activities and projecting their future paths is the lack of recent and accurate data regarding various economic sectors of the economy, especially in the area of small businesses and farming sectors. However, our continuous and broad presence in the region of South Lebanon in particular, helps to assess the needs of local communities in a timely manner and broad ranging areas.

• **Strengths**

- Wide geographical presence in South Lebanon and outreach in the region, that enable us to recognize the needs of different target groups in a timely manner, especially local farmers, small businesses, women, youths and fishermen
- Different fields of activities and expertise that gives our business model a high level of flexibility and resilience in difficult times
- Synergies produced between our various lines of work that also benefit local communities and stakeholders
- Our partners and collaborators, with many of whom we have a long-standing relationship and collaborative experience
- An unwavering and solid adherence to our vision and mission which helps maintain stability and depth and gives us more timely response and availability to new opportunities
- Our longstanding relationship with local municipalities, Union of municipalities and local NGOs



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• *Weaknesses*

- Inability to access funds from the banking system following the financial crisis in Lebanon
- Reduced financial strength that ensued from the crisis which negatively impacted our ability to lend from our own funds
- Failure of Lebanese authorities to provide assistance to the microcredit and agricultural sectors, in terms of policies or facilities, special treatment or allowances, specific laws and regulations
- Reduced ability to provide staff training resulting from the reduced financial means available

• *Opportunities*

- Accrued needs in our areas of activity, as the financial crisis worsened the situation of the needy and marginalized communities
- Reduced competition in our area of operations, especially in the Micro-Credit sector as a result of the withdrawal of several Micro-Credit institutions from South Lebanon, due to their diminished financial resources
- New opportunities and projects in the humanitarian and ecological fields with the increased focus on these areas, both locally and internationally
- A dynamic youth sector that constitutes a growing share of the population (over 50%) and that is engaging in new kinds of activities (information technology, telecom, online business, online applications development...), as well as renewed crafts and businesses (ceramics, food processing, handicrafts...)

• *Threats*

- Continuous instability at the political level, locally and regionally, which negatively impacts all kinds of economic activity
- Precarious general economic conditions that continue to weigh on small and medium business decisions and ventures
- Weak local regulations that still do not properly serve the needs of SMEs and marginalized sectors of the economy
- Renewed migration of skills since the economic crisis, which reduces the availability of much needed competences in specialized areas of the economy



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Four-year strategic objectives

ADR's strategic objectives for the next four years revolve around the following lines:

- Strengthen ADR's financial capabilities through a more active management of own funds and assets. This is made possible by the recent stabilization of the financial and monetary situation in Lebanon.
- Relaunch ADR's own microcredit activity and resume its vital role in this area.
- Expand ADR's role in the agricultural sector, as this area remains both an opportunity and a challenge, especially in south Lebanon, where many small farmers still work in dire conditions that have deteriorated further due to the negative effects of the war and the continued weakness of the economy. This can be achieved through the reactivation of the agriculture center CASUR and the implementation of related development projects more ecologically oriented, in turn making our role more effectively aligned to environmental norms.
- Explore new areas of activity in the social and humanitarian areas, where more assistance is needed these days especially in South Lebanon, where about 100,000 people were recently displaced from the border area.
- Achieve more synergies in different areas of our activities that could mutually benefit different groups and stakeholders. This requires a more active communication policy, involving different social media and channels, in order to enhance interaction between different parties and advocate transparency and mutual exchange values.
- Enhance our networking and partnership with local municipalities and other local organization in order to better know and serve the needs of local communities.
- Re-skill and retool our team to work more efficiently and integrate new concepts of development and societal welfare.
- Ensure the effective and successful continuation of the ongoing projects ADR is participating in, while continuing to partake in new ventures that are in line with our values and areas of expertise.



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In order to achieve these goals, we plan to widen our spectrum of activities to reach new sectors of the economy in line with the changing and evolving needs and activities in our society. These include olive oil production, food processing, local crafts and sustainable farming, in addition to sectors we already assist such as fishermen, small businesses and farmers.

Our financial conditions are still dependent on our inability to use our own funds, which we still cannot access at the bank. This issue has hampered our growth in the last four years and still weighs on our capacity to lend and assist local populations and projects from our own resources. However, we started to rebuild our own financial capacities in the past year, and will continue to do so in the coming few years, albeit slowly and gradually. We are aware that this has also hindered our ability to grow our institutional capacities and employee growth to match the expansion in our developmental and humanitarian projects in the past few years, but we are beginning to address this by increasing specialized training to our staff and have started attracting employees in fields where we lack specialized expertise.

Our partnerships, both local and international have helped us go through the financial crisis in the country with minimal negative effects and improved our ability to consolidate our capabilities. The local partners we envisage to continue collaborating with in the next few years are mainly, AlShouf Cedar Society, Care International Lebanon, Union of Tyre Municipalities, Union of Al Qalaa Municipalities and Union of Zahrani Municipalities. At the international level, our main partners are Fundacion Promocion Social (FPS), Spain and Petra Patrimonia, Cooperative d'Activite et d'Emploi, France.