



# Hermel:

**Rich in Resources and Marginalized**

Survey of social and economic establishments in 5 Municipalities



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# Hermel!

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Francesca Serra- ARCS Project Manager

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## **Preface**

This document is the output of one of the activities implemented by the project "Women and Nature: a cross cutting approach" (L08-A0004 AID 8746) funded by Italian Cooperation in the frame of ROSS Program (Phase 2) and implemented by the Italian NGO ARCS and the Lebanese NGO Mada. The aim of this project was to improve women's social and economic status in Hermel area and was structured around two main components:

- > women's economic participation;
- > incorporation of women's empowerment policies in Municipal development strategies

The survey of social and economic establishments in Hermel area aimed at enriching the database of the Documentation Centre of the Hermel Union of Municipalities, providing a source of information for the strategic planning process enacted through the same project, while involving women from the five Municipalities of: Hermel, Chawaghir, Qasr-Fissane, Kweikh and Juar el-Hashish.

## List of Acronyms

<b>CAS</b>	Central Administration of Statistics
<b>CDR</b>	Council for Development and Reconstruction
<b>CERD</b>	Centre for Educational Research and Development
<b>CRDL</b>	Centre de ressources sur le développement local
<b>CRI</b>	Consultation and Research Institute
<b>CRTD.A</b>	Collective for Research and Training on Development – Action
<b>ESFD</b>	Economic and Social Fund for Development
<b>IPC</b>	International Poverty Centre
<b>LDP</b>	Local Development Plan
<b>MDGR</b>	Millennium Development Goals Report
<b>MoIM</b>	Ministry of Interior and Municipalities
<b>MoSA</b>	Ministry of Social Affairs
<b>NPMPLT</b>	National Physical Master Plan for the Lebanese Territory
<b>OMSAR</b>	Office of the Ministry of State for Administrative Reform
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund

## Introduction

The survey focuses on social centres, commercial, industrial and craft establishments as relevant stakeholders in local development. It highlights the achievements of urbanization in a dominantly rural area such as the Hermel Caza, looking at the activities carried out by the population in the economical and the socio-cultural sector. This perspective aims at enriching previous research, which focused on local resources and service provision to the population, and on agricultural activities and assets.

The survey was designed to set up a database for the Documentation Centre established within Hermel Union of Municipalities office through the project itself. Such database is meant as a tool for local administrative bodies and development agencies in order to identify priorities in local development, as well as being a model for regular update of available information.

The field survey was carried out in August and September 2008.

ARCS Expert and MADA Field Officer prepared two questionnaires: one for economic activities and another for social centres<sup>1</sup>.

No social centre was recorded in any of the villages. The Union of Municipalities provided a list of 21 centres present in Hermel town, 14 of which were operative during the period of field work and their staff were available for interviews (Box 1).

The Union of Municipalities also collected inventory lists of commercial, industrial, and craft establishments present in each Municipality.

Each establishment was identified by its kind of product: the lists were filled by mayors and their staff; providing numbers of establishments for each category of product. Though the information proved not to be fully reliable, in some cases, it still provided orientation for the definition of the sampling criteria.

The field area was divided into ten territorial units, corresponding to the four villages and the six neighbourhoods of Hermel town (Ma'alli, De'ia, Sabil, Hara, Morah, Daura). In each unit, interviews were carried out by a volunteer resident within the same unit. One-day training on how to approach interviewees, put questions and record answers, was organized

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**Box 1:**  
***Social Centres Surveyed in Hermel***

- 1) *Social Development Centre*
  - 2) *Red Cross Medical and Social Centre*
  - 3) *Red Cross First Aid Centre*
  - 4) *Ragheb Harb*
  - 5) *Association "Culture and Heritage"*
  - 6) *Municipal Cultural Centre*
  - 7) *Menshiyat al-Wakef*
  - 8) *Civil Protection*
  - 9) *Park*
  - 10) *Al-Jihad lal-Binaa*
  - 11) *Sisters of Jesus*
  - 12) *Al-Tadamon al-Riyadi*
  - 13) *Al-Mabarar*
  - 14) *Al-Ber wal-Ehsan*
-

by the research coordinator for all volunteers, in order to avoid- as far as possible- misleading results.

A random sampling system was employed unit wise. The establishments identified in each unit were divided into three ranges according to the lower, medium and higher number of establishments of the same category (i.e. kind of product) estimated in each unit. The categories of shops falling in the lower range (1 to 3 shops) are represented in the sample by one shop each, the categories of shops in the medium range (4 to 7 shops) are represented in the sample by two shops each, and those in the higher range (8 to 11) are represented by 3 shops for each category.

Though the total number of shops for each category was based on rough estimation, the sample (Box 2), nevertheless, provides a picture of the different categories of establishments identified by over-representing single shop categories, while still accounting for potential variations within each category of the medium and higher ranges.

The survey was as such not meant to provide a comprehensive census of trade, craft and industry establishments in the 5 Municipalities' areas, but to carry out a rapid field assessment and to give way to a monitoring procedure to be undertaken by the Documentation Centre towards regular updating of the database.

<b>Box 2: Establishments Surveyed in each Municipality by Product</b>			<b>Hermel</b>	<b>Chawaghir</b>	<b>Qasr</b>	<b>Kweikh</b>	<b>Juar al-Hashish</b>
<b>Commercial</b>	<b>Food</b>	<i>Butcher</i>	10	-	-	-	4
		<i>Dairy products sale</i>	1	-	1	-	-
		<i>Grains and seeds</i>	2	1	4	-	1
		<i>Grocery</i>	30	6	21	1	16
		<i>Sweets</i>	4	-	-	-	-
		<i>Vegetables</i>	12	2	4	-	2
		<i>Vegetables retail</i>	2	-	-	-	-
	<b>Non food</b>	<i>Books and stationary</i>	3	-	1	-	-
		<i>Furniture</i>	2	-	1	-	-
		<i>Household tools</i>	7	-	2	-	-
		<i>Pharmacy</i>	4	-	1	-	-
		<i>Shoes</i>	10	-	1	-	-
		<i>Textiles and clothes</i>	12	2	3	-	-
	<b>Agriculture</b>	<i>Agricultural machines and tools</i>	1	-	1	-	1
		<i>Animal feeds</i>	1	2	-	-	1
		<i>Pesticides</i>	-	1	4	-	-
	<b>Technology</b>	<i>Electrical appliances sales and maintenance</i>	8	-	3	-	-
		<i>Electronic appliances sales</i>	8	-	-	-	-
		<i>Internet café</i>	8	-	-	-	-
	<b>Hospitality</b>	<i>Restaurant</i>	5	8	1	-	-
		<i>Café</i>	4	-	2	-	-
		<i>Hotel/Motel</i>	1	1	-	-	-
	<b>Fuel</b>	<i>Gas (natural liquid gas, household)</i>	2	-	4	-	-
		<i>Gas (petrol, benzene, diesel and lubricant oils)</i>	5	-	-	-	1
<b>Craftss</b>		<i>Food processing</i>	1	-	-	1	-
		<i>Bakery (modern oven, tannour, saj)</i>	8	1	-	-	-
		<i>Barber</i>	7	1	1	-	-
		<i>Blacksmith (western trend)</i>	1	-	1	-	1
		<i>Car accessories</i>	2	-	-	-	-
		<i>Car body work</i>	4	-	2	-	-
		<i>Car electrician</i>	1	-	-	-	-
		<i>Car mechanics</i>	9	-	-	-	-
		<i>Car painting</i>	3	-	1	-	-
		<i>Carpenter</i>	4	1	1	-	-
		<i>Dairy products processing</i>	2	-	-	-	-
		<i>Hairdresser and beauty</i>	8	2	1	-	1
		<i>Photo studio</i>	2	-	1	-	-
		<i>Tailor</i>	2	-	1	-	-
		<i>Woodwork finishing</i>	1	-	-	-	-
<b>Industrial</b>		<i>Aluminium</i>	1	-	-	-	-
		<i>Animal feeds production</i>	2	-	-	-	-
		<i>Building blocks press</i>	2	1	2	-	1
		<i>Carpentry</i>	3	-	-	-	-
		<i>Clothes production</i>	1	-	1	-	-
		<i>Dairy products</i>	2	-	-	-	-
		<i>Tiles press</i>	-	-	-	-	1
<b>Not available</b>			5	1	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>			213	30	66	2	30

Previous research on the five Municipalities was conducted in 2004 by OMSAR and CDR "Towards the definition of a Simplified Local Development Plan (LDP)": detailed area profiles were prepared on specific sub-areas, identified according to the agglomeration patterns of the villages around Hermel. The five Municipalities were divided into two sub-areas: Hermel and Chawaghir on one hand, and Qasr, Kweikh and Juar al-Hashish on the other. The whole area will be identified in the context of this survey as the Hermel agglomeration.

Data collected by CDR in the Hermel agglomeration, compared with the data on the Governorate and Caza levels from relevant literature, will be extensively quoted in order to put into context the results of ARCS/MADA survey.

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**Box 3: Toponymy of the 5 Municipalities Area**

<b>Hermel, Chawaghir</b>	<i>Hermel; Mazra'a Beit Tashim; Naasriya; Bweida; Mansura; Chawaghir; Ma'asir; Mazra'a Sajid; Zaghrine; Zwaitany; Wadi al-Karam; Wadi al-Turkman; Wadi al-Ratl; Mazra'a al-Faqya; Hosh Sayed 'Ali</i>
<b>Qasr, Kweikh, Juar al-Hashish</b>	<i>Qasr; Bustan; Morah Shaa'ab; Harika; Hosharya; Morah Zokba; Kweikh; Salahat al-Maa; Qanafid; Barisa; Charbine; Morah al-'Ein; Sweisa; Fissane; Juar al-Hashish; Hamiri; Marjahine; Beit Samaqa; Buiut Ayun</i>

OMSAR, 2005

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## **1. Background Information**

### **1.1. Geographical and demographic features**

The five Municipalities covered by the survey are located in Hermel Caza, in the north-western side of the former Bekaa Governorate - which in 2003 (Law 522, 16/07/03) was split into two parts to make of Ba'albek-Hermel area a distinct Governorate with its administrative centre in Ba'albek<sup>2</sup>. Nonetheless, such separation is not acknowledged by most surveys even after 2003 because the process of establishment of the new administrative system is not yet completed.

Hermel Caza lies along the left side of Orontes River, at the threshold of the coastal mountainous chain and the internal Syrian Desert. The Hermel Caza's administrative centre is the most distant Lebanese town from Beirut.

Hermel Caza is 56.535 ha wide, with an estimated population of 77.000 registered residents and 62.000 permanent residents<sup>3</sup>, roughly less than one fifth of the total population of Bekaa Governorate (471.209 inh., 12.5 % of the total Lebanese population).

Localiban web site (Annexe 3) reports for Hermel Caza a surface of 731 km<sup>2</sup> wide, corresponding to the 6.9% of the total area of Lebanon, and records a population of 48.000 people, 1.3% of total Lebanese population, distributed in 33 villages, with a density of 66 inh/km<sup>2</sup>. At the last Municipal elections in

2004, 25.435 residents, 57.537 registered electors and 30.566 actual voters were counted in Hermel Caza. These numbers are very different from those provided by the LDP, (Box 4.a), although both sources point at CDR as their reference. Apparently, such difference is also not explained by a time gap in data collection: both population data refer to the year 2004, while Localiban web-site quotes also CDR work dating back to 2002. Because of these and further inconsistencies among data from different sources, this research relies primarily on the LDP for specific data on Hermel agglomeration.

<i>Box 4.a: Demography</i>	<i>Bekaa Governorate</i>	<i>Hermel Caza</i>
<b>Population</b>	471.209 (2004) 539.448 (1997)	62.000-77.000
<b>Area</b>	4.163 km <sup>2</sup>	565,35 km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Households</b>	102.797	6.752
<b>Average household size</b>	4.58	5.61 (2004), 5.77 (1998)
<b>Density, inh/km<sup>2</sup></b>	129.6	53
<b>Proportion on the national total pop. in 2000</b>	13,4%	-
<b>Projected population growth for 2030</b>	38.90 %	-
<b>Proportion on the national total pop. in 2030</b>	14.1 %	-
<b>Proportion of inhabitants in large agglomeration in 2000</b>	34%	-
<b>Projected proportion of inhabitants in agglomeration in 2030</b>	40%	-

UNDP/MoSA, 2006; CAS, 1997; OMSAR 2005; NPMP/LT, 2004

Notwithstanding variations among available data, the area covered by the 5 Municipalities is the most densely populated and most urbanized in the Caza as a whole. Thus, exceeding the average density for the Caza, which is among the less populated regions in Lebanon, given that the Bekaa Governorate scores the lowest urbanization rate<sup>4</sup>, and the lowest density of all Governorates<sup>5</sup>, and that the national average density reaches 400 inh./km<sup>2</sup>.

As the following chapter will show in detail, Hermel area ranks among the poorest regions of Lebanon. Differences in numbers of registered residents and permanent ones highlight a migration trend which is a typical feature of Hermel society: the proportion of displaced population varies from 45% in Hermel, Chawaghir and surrounding villages to 52% in Qasr and surrounding villages<sup>6</sup>. Characteristic of the area are the internal seasonal

movements of people from the mountainous area to the plain and to Syria, either to cultivate the land owned by the families from the mountains, or for market purposes.

<b>Box 4.b: Demography</b>	<b>Hermel, Chawaghir</b>	<b>Qasr, Kweikh, Juar al-Hashish</b>
<b>Population</b>	26.000-48.000	12.000-25.000
<b>Area</b>	510 km <sup>2</sup>	n.a.
<b>Election certificates</b>	23.802	11.728
<b>Youth under 21 years old</b>	24.198	13.272
<b>Households</b>	4335	2000
<b>Average household size</b>	6	6

OMSAR 2005

The Caza of Hermel is neighboured by Akkar and Dennyeh Cazas in the west, Ba'albek Caza in the south, and the Syrian Arab Republic in the north east.

Given the relatively large distance to the Bekaa provincial capital in Zahle (100-135 km), and to Beirut (145-175 km)<sup>7</sup> the area suffers from a relevant degree of isolation due to the bad conditions of an insufficient road network, particularly towards the neighbouring Governorate of North Lebanon and its provincial capital Tripoli, beyond al-Jord mountainous area.

In the NPMPLT, Hermel Caza is acknowledged as the most deprived region in Lebanon in terms of road network, proposing reinforcement of the connection between Hermel and Tripoli through Akkar (a highway project between Tripoli and Halba, and improvement of the by-pass between Qobaiyat and Hermel to become a high-speed connection), and between Ba'albek and Hermel (improvement of the existing itinerary towards a high-speed connection)<sup>8</sup>.

The isolation of the area is reflected by the huge disparity of socio-environmental conditions between the different areas of the Bekaa Governorate. It led in 2002 to the demand of separating both Cazas of Ba'albek and Hermel from Bekaa Governorate, a claim considered in NPMPL as the result of a negative centrifugal trend in Lebanese society<sup>9</sup>.

Nonetheless, the NPMPLT acknowledges such variety and proposes divergent patterns of development for the northern and the southern sectors of Bekaa Governorate, including Zahle, Chtaura, and Qab Elias among the 'metropolises of balance' surrounding metropolitan Beirut. It also suggests to direct urban pressure towards the southern agglomerations of Ba'albek and Zahle-Chtaura, in order to preserve the landscape and natural resources of the northern area of Hermel<sup>10</sup>.

Hermel is thus listed among the 11 "relay cities" organizing the rural periphery of Bekaa in the urbanization pattern envisioned by the NPMPLT, and is

considered as the one deserving particular attention<sup>11</sup>.

At the local level, the concentration of administrative, educational, sanitary, socio-cultural and economic functions in Hermel town demonstrates that a high degree of urban pressure is in fact into play, causing marginalization of the residents of the villages in the Caza, as stressed by the LDP<sup>12</sup>.

**Box 5: Geographical features**

	<i>Hermel, Chawaghir</i>	<i>Qasr, Kweikh, Juar al-Hashish</i>
<b>Distance from urban centres</b>	<i>Zahle: 100 km. Beirut: 145 km.</i>	<i>Hermel: 18 km. Zahle: 120 km. Juar al-Hashish-Beirut: 175 km.</i>
<b>Altitude</b>	<i>Lowest in Jisr al-Asi: 607 m Highest in Zaghrine: 1350 m</i>	<i>Lowest in Qasr: 630 m. Highest in Juar al-Hashish: 1650 m</i>
<b>Altitude areas with highest density</b>	<i>750-607 m</i>	<i>800-630 m</i>

*OMSAR 2005*

The morphological differences among plain and mountains within the area of the five Municipalities leads to the diversification of climate, hydrology, soil and vegetation. This diversification is considered as an asset for the local economic development, particularly in terms of agricultural production and tourism<sup>13</sup>.

Three categories of soil have been identified: "red and fertile" in Orontes valley and in the Jord valleys; "calcareous and less fertile" in the south; "brown and poorly fertile" in the North<sup>14</sup>.

The climate is Mediterranean in the mountains of El-Jord area, and desert-like and dry in the plain.

The temperature range is between 5, 5 ° in January and 32° in August. Rain also varies according to elevation, with 250 mm per year in the plain, 400-600 in the hills, and up to 1000 mm in the higher mountains.

The land is also rich in water resources, dating back to the time of Palmyra, when Queen Zenobia used to consider this area as the main source of water for her kingdom.

Nonetheless, the lacks in infrastructure, sanitation and water provision undermines access to drinkable water for the larger majority of the population, in addition to leading to the pollution of the Orontes River.

According to the final report of the NPMPLT: "Desertification hazards threaten the arid areas of the North East region (Hermel and Orontes regions), that are already suffering from economic and social hardships. This threat requires: control on the urbanization rate, careful management of irrigation and grazing, as well as efforts for reforestation. This region should benefit from a development policy, based more on quality (production and service) than quantity improvements. Urban pressure should be oriented, if possible,

towards the southern agglomerations, Ba'albek and Zahle- Chtoura"<sup>15</sup>. Furthermore, the establishment of a national natural Park reserve in the North, which will include the mountain range of Qornet as-Sawda, and the areas of Karm Chbat, Qammoua and Fissane, is recommended in the NPM-PLT. This recommendation is due to: "the exceptional quality of the natural areas of this region, the preservation status of this zone, its very low urbanization rate, and for its income generating impact on neglected areas such as Akkar and Hermel".<sup>16</sup>

### ***Natural and Archaeological resources***

Forests cover 21% of the Hermel Caza area: the Soueyssa forest was included among the sites to be preserved from construction, cutting of trees, grazing, excavations and other threats within the radius of 500 m, by a Decision of the Ministry of Agriculture prior to the Law 558 (26 July 1996), protecting coniferous woods and forests on the M'shaa and public properties<sup>17</sup>.

Field trips and interviews for this survey have also highlighted the environmental value of the Lazzab trees for their impact on the climate, air, and soil.

The area is also rich in archaeological sites that are worth being included in the list of resources in urgent need of environmental protection, rehabilitation, and preservation.

**Box 6: Archaeological and natural resources**

	<i>Site</i>	<i>Locations and features</i>
<b>Hermel</b>	<i>Hermel Pyramid</i>	<i>Located on a hill 4 km south of Hermel town. It is an obelisk, 27 m. high, probably built on the tomb of an ancient Syriac prince.</i>
	<i>Mar Maroun Cave</i>	<i>Located on a rocky slope of the Orontes valley, 5 km south of Hermel town, it was used as a temporary shelter by the descendants of Mar Maroun, founder of the Maronite Church.</i>
	<i>Breyssa tombs</i>	<i>Located in a small village in the mountains north west of Hermel, dating back to the times of Nabuccodonossor.</i>
	<i>Ras al-Mal Spring and Manshiya al-Uaqif</i>	<i>Located in the centre of Hermel town, near to the Municipality, inside a parcel registered as Waqf property, and close to an old cemetery.</i>
<b>Chawaghir</b>	<i>El-Orontes river</i>	<i>The El Orontes River rises in an area south of Hermel town and flows through the Syrian Arab Republic before entering Iskenderun (Alexandretta) and emptying into the Mediterranean Sea. The El-Azraq spring is a very important Lebanese tributary to the Orontes River; its annual flow is more than 400 million m<sup>3</sup> (Amery, 1998). Surface water flow to Syria is estimated at 510 million m<sup>3</sup>/year through the El-Orontes river and the bordering El Kebir river. A recent (informal) agreement between Lebanon and Syria on El-Orontes river has led to a share of 80 million m<sup>3</sup>/year for Lebanon and the remainder for Syria (AQUASTAT, 1997).</i>
	<i>Zenobia aqueduct</i>	<i>Located about 8 km north of Hermel town. It is an underground system for water channelling and dates back to the times of Palmyra kingdom.</i>
<b>Qasr, Juar al-Hashish</b>	<i>Lazzab forest, El-Jouz Spring, El-Ma'abour Spring and Lazzab forest</i>	<i>Located in the mountains inhabited by the el-Jafaar family</i>

RPA7, PC 5: 22-6:16

**1.2.Socio-economic features****Society**

The prevalence of family belonging in the social relations in Lebanon is reproduced at the national level in the sectarian organization of the Lebanese society and its State's structure.

According to sectarian divisions, Hermel Caza is a predominantly Shi'ia region, with the presence of a very small Christian minority.

Family belonging is, nonetheless, a privileged pattern of socialization among residents in Hermel Caza, notwithstanding its religious homogeneity.

The patriarchal features of such a pattern, and their translation into the State Constitution and the legal system put female residents in a peculiar condition of vulnerability, as compared to the male population (Box 7).

**Box 7: Indicators of Women's Vulnerability in Baalbeck-Hermel Region**

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
<i>House owners</i>	85%	15%
<i>Land owners</i>	92%	8%
<i>Industrial or agricultural equipment owners</i>	98%	2%
<i>Head of household/total number of households</i>	87%	13%
<i>Widows/ total female heads of households</i>		82%
<i>Illiterate/ total female heads of households</i>		80%

MoSA/UNFPA, 1996 in CRI, 1998: ES7

Clan structure still holds a high degree of control on access to land, thus determining territorial divisions and related cooperation gaps among the residents of the different territorial units. Such divisions are occasionally translated into social tensions among different clans, particularly among clans from the mountains and Hermel residents<sup>18</sup>.

Clan structure has been addressed by the authors of the LDP as the first of three patterns of socialization enacted by the population of the Hermel agglomeration<sup>19</sup>.

In the LDP report, the second pattern is determined by affiliations to different political parties, and the third by membership in different types of associations, thus suggesting that politics and social activism are also influential factors in community development.

Such patterns of socialization are important means of social inclusion and welfare in a context where infrastructure and services are lacking.

### **Housing Conditions**

Despite the previously mentioned relative low density of the area, housing conditions are a critical issue. 35,9 % of households in Bekaa Governorate have more than 1.5 individuals per room, as compared to the country average of 29.7 %. Furthermore, data on average household size in Box 4.a and 4.b suggest that the average number of individuals per room is likely to be higher in the Hermel agglomeration compared to the Caza level or to the Governorate level.

Housing conditions in Hermel agglomeration are also affected by the lack of infrastructure and services- as highlighted in the LDP report (Box 8) <sup>20</sup>. Furthermore, available infrastructure is concentrated in Hermel town, while the surrounding villages suffer from lack of improvement of the housing stock.

A public water network exists only in Hermel town and its immediate sur-

roundings: it is old, damaged and the water is polluted. In addition, only Hermel town is connected to the telecommunication network: mobile phones are the only choice in the villages though not all the Caza is covered by the network.

Electricity is the only service reaching all the areas in the Caza, though disparities in access depend on the financial situation of the households and the Municipalities.

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**Box 8: Housing and Infrastructure**

	<i>Hermel, Chawaghir</i>	<i>Qasr, Kweikh, Juar al-Hashish</i>
<b>Dwellings</b>	4491 units 4335 primary residence 15 commercial 141 secondary residence 15% in Hermel and 100% in the villages have no building permit	2096 units 2000 primary residence - 96 secondary residence 30% in Qasr and 100% in the villages have no building permit
<b>Water provision</b>	60% of dwellings are not connected to any water network 35% connected to a private water network or to deep wells	No dwelling is connected to a water network. 400 artesian wells and collection of rain water are the main source of water
<b>Sewage</b>	12% of dwellings have no sewage 73% have pits 6% have open drainage 9% is connected to a sewage network	No dwelling is connected to any sewage network. Most dwellings have pits.
<b>Telephone</b>	Hermel town: 1400 accounts Chawaghir: 45 accounts No connection in the villages	No connection
<b>Waste management</b>	Municipalities collect waste and burn it. The dump site in north west of Hermel town is saturated.	Municipalities collect waste and burn it.

OMSAR, 2005

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**Health**

Access to health services is also limited: 58.5% of Bekaa residents are not covered by any health insurance, whereas the same category of residents sets

at 53.3 % for the whole country of Lebanon. 10.3 % of the total population benefiting from a health insurance in Lebanon live in Bekaa Governorate.

In Hermel Caza though, access to health is also a matter of lack of establishments.

In Ba'albek-Hermel region, 53% of households have access to health centres and dispensaries, 74% of hospitals are privately owned and access to

hospitals is higher in Ba'albek than in Hermel<sup>21</sup>. Hospitals or health establishments are absent in the villages around Hermel town<sup>22</sup>.

**Box 9: Health**

<b>Herme Town</b>	<b>Surroundings</b>
3 hospitals (1 public and 2 private) 5 clinics 4 dispensaries 116 nurses 4 dentists 4 ostetrician 3 pharmacies	Mobile clinic every 15 days by Islamic Health Committe

OMSAR, 2005

**Education**

Regarding the educational attainments of the population, in 2004 the Bekaa Governorate reached the highest illiteracy rate in Lebanon, with 13.4% of the population of four years and above being classified as either illiterate or as not enrolled in schools, compared to the country average of 8.3%<sup>23</sup>.

Previous MoSA research in 1996 accounts for 13.6 % of illiterates/total population in the Ba'albek-Hermel region (6% of illiterate males on total male population, 21% of illiterate females on total female population)<sup>24</sup>, and a 23.2% of illiterates among the population of 10 years and above in Herme Caza<sup>25</sup>.

The rates of school enrolment in Bekaa Governorate are slightly higher than the country average only for the age groups 5-9 and 10-14, but are significantly lower for the 20-24 age group, with 29.3% for the Bekaa compared to 34.2% at the country level<sup>26</sup>.

The distribution of students according to type of educational institution shows a thin prevalence of enrolment in private institutions. 53.2% of students in Lebanon and 51.8% of students in Bekaa Governorate are enrolled in private schools<sup>27</sup>.

CERD data provides a useful comparison among educational services and establishments at country and local levels; according to the distribution of schools according to their administrative status, capacity (number of teachers), and outreach (number of students).

**Box 10: Distribution of schools according to administrative divisions**

	<b>Lebanon</b>	<b>Bekaa Governorate</b>	<b>Herme</b>
<b>Public schools</b>	1393	263	31
<b>Free private schools</b>	379	90	7
<b>Private schools</b>	1040	134	6
<b>Total</b>	2812	487	44

CERD, 2006-07

Bekaa records the highest number of free private schools among all Lebanese Governorates. In Bekaa schools, the English language is taught in 98 public schools, 54 free private schools and 83 non-free private schools- including both schools teaching only English and schools teaching English and French, the rest being only French teaching schools. In Hermel Caza only one school teaches both the French and English languages, and it is a free private school in the centre of Hermel town.

**Box 11: Number of Students according to Type of School**

	<i>Lebanon</i>	<i>Bekaa Governorate</i>	<i>Hermel</i>
<b>Public schools</b>	326503 total	48407 total	4471 total
<b>Free private schools</b>	124281 total	31591 total	2811 total
<b>Non free private schools</b>	467093 total	49288 total	1056 total
<b>Technical public schools</b>	37446 total 16982 female 20464 male	6899 total 3296 female 3603 male	-
<b>Technical private schools</b>	62285 total 29738 female 32547 male	2607 total 1404 female 1203 male	-
<b>Total n° of students</b>	917877 total	129286 total	8338 total

CERD, 2006-07

**Box 12: Number of Teachers according to Type of School**

	<i>Lebanon</i>	<i>Bekaa</i>	<i>Hermel</i>
<b>Public schools</b>	39945	6503	463
<b>Private schools</b>	47812	5326	190

CERD, 2006-07

**Box 13: Education in Hermel Agglomeration according to LDP**

	<i>Hermel town</i>	<i>Chawaghir, Qasr, Kweikh, Juar al-Hashish</i>
<b>Schools</b>	22 Primary and Secondary schools (14 public, 8 private)	1 Secondary school in Salahat al-Ma In villages only Primary Schools
<b>Illiteracy</b>	23%	33%

OMSAR, 2005

According to the authors of the LDP, educational institutions, like other services in Hermel agglomeration, are concentrated in Hermel town, with Secondary schools of good quality, and bad quality Primary schools<sup>28</sup>.

In the same report, the lack of equipment, lack of specialization in professional education, total absence of training in agriculture, and the limited presence of foreign languages in school curricula - other than the French

Language- are mentioned as the most evident lacks of educational opportunities in Hermel agglomeration.

### **Labour**

The Bekaa Governorate has the lowest economic activity rates in Lebanon, and the lowest female economic activity rates, while the male economic activity rate is only higher than Nabatieh among all Lebanese Governorates.

These values fail to mirror the unemployment rate in Bekaa, calculated on the active population and not on the total population: female unemployment rates in Bekaa are lower than the country average, and are also the lowest among all Governorates, while male and all employment rates are higher only than North Lebanon. Due to the criteria adopted in the ILO standard unemployment classification, women who have not previously sought work (third criterion) are excluded from the number of the active female population, and such values run the risk of underestimating female unemployment. Adopting only two of the criteria of the ILO standard unemployment classification, which define the unemployed persons as those individuals who have not carried out any work during the week prior to the interview, and are available for work, leads us to a higher figure (12.3%), of female unemployment at the country level. The same rate for Bekaa is expected to rise accordingly<sup>29</sup>.

#### **Box 14: Employment/Unemployment**

<b>Labour force</b>	<b>Lebanon 2004</b>	<b>Bekaa Governorate 2004</b>	<b>Baalbeck-Hermel 1996</b>
<i>female/total labour force</i>	23.3%	14.4%	15%
<i>male/total labour force</i>	76.7%	85.6%	-
<i>female/ total female labour force in Lebanon</i>		6.7%	-
<i>male/ total male labour force in Lebanon</i>		12.2%	-
<b>Economic activity rate</b> : economically active individuals/ population 15 years and above			
<i>total</i>	44%	37.7%	27%
<i>females</i>	20.4%	10.9%	-
<i>males</i>	68.9%	64.2%	-
<b>Unemployment rate</b> (ILO standard measurement): unemployed./active pop. 15 years and above			
<i>total</i>	7.9%	5.5%	10%
<i>females</i>	9.5%	5.6%	-
<i>males</i>	7.3%	5.5%	-

UNDP/MoSA, 2004-05 : 54, 56, 60, 62; MoSA/UNFPA, 1996 in CRI, 1998.

As in the case of socio-economic indicators in the Hermel agglomeration, unemployment rates are also expected to be worse than the country or Governorate averages.

Women's employment could also be compared to the rate of female heads of households in Ba'albek-Hermel (Box 7), taking into account that the educational and agricultural sectors employ 60% of female labour force in the Ba'albek-Hermel region<sup>30</sup>. In addition to that, the LDP report for Hermel agglomeration highlights women's employment in the health sector as nurses (101 females on a total of 116 employees registered in the Caza).

**Box 15: Distribution of the labour force by economic sector**

<i>Area</i>	<i>Lebanon</i>		<i>Bekaa</i>	<i>Ba'albeck-Hermel</i>
<i>Standard</i>	<i>Actual labour force 2004</i>	<i>Population 1996</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Population</i>
<b><i>Agriculture</i></b>	8%	9%	20.4%	22.1%
<b><i>Processing industry</i></b>	15%	14.7%	12.5%	<b><i>20% Small scale self employment</i></b>
<b><i>Construction</i></b>	9%	11.2%	9.5%	
<b><i>Trade</i></b>	22%	22.3%	20.3%	
<b><i>Other services</i></b>	46%	42.8%	37.3%	

*CAS 1997, UNDP/MoSA, 2004-05 : 58, MoSA/UNFPA, 1996 in CRI, 1998.*

In Hermel Caza, 33% of inhabitants are employed in agriculture, reaching the second highest share in Lebanon out of the total active population<sup>31</sup>. Crops are 11.194 h wide, covering 20% of the total Caza surface, though corresponding only to 58% of the total agricultural land in the Caza. Main activities include cultivation of olive, apricot, almond, cereals, legumes, and tomato, in addition to breeding: goats, sheep, cows, bees, and trout rearing<sup>32</sup>.

Other sectors of employment in Hermel agglomeration include hand crafts activities in coal production, aluminium and food processing. The Tourism sector can count on archaeological and natural sites, but it suffers because of the lack of infrastructure.

### **Poverty**

Poverty and income indicators are worse in Bekaa compared to the country average. Consumption expenditure in Lebanon, for example, is relatively unequal: 92% of aggregated inequality in consumption can be attributed to within-Governorate inequality, while only 8% is due to inter-Governorate inequality; confirming that socio-economic conditions vary significantly within the Bekaa Governorate as it was highlighted in previous indicators.

Poverty indicators also acquire different meaning according to household composition: cost-of-basic-need method has been employed in previous re-

searches to construct absolute and house-hold specific poverty lines. Bekaa Governorate was attributed a higher-than-average prevalence of extreme poverty, and an average prevalence of overall poverty, with extremely poor households being over-represented in Bekaa compared to its population shares.<sup>33</sup>

According to overall poverty headcount estimations, Lebanon was divided into 15 homogeneous areas, Ba'albek-Hermel region ranking in the fifth position in the higher poverty rates chart. Ba'albek-Hermel region is estimated to have an overall headcount poverty rate higher than 30%, not far from the country average which is slightly below 30%<sup>34</sup>.

**Box 16: Overall Poverty Headcount**

	<b>Bekaa</b>
<i>Extremely poor population</i>	17.2%
<i>Moderately poor population</i>	11.4%
<i>Entire poor population</i>	13%
<i>Total population</i>	12.7%

*(IPC/UNDP, 2008: 10; UNDP/MoSA, 2008:20)*

In terms of individual average income, 28% of the total population of Ba'albek-Hermel region lives below the minimum wage of LBP 300.000: population living below this index were found to account for the 51% of female labour force, 57.2% of workers in agriculture, and 33% of workers in construction<sup>35</sup>.

According to the Unsatisfied Basic Needs Approach, Hermel Caza (65.9%) is the second Caza in the country after Bint Jbeil (67.2%) with the higher percentages of households living in very low satisfaction, for a country average of 7.2% (baseline year 1996)<sup>36</sup>.

According to the extreme income poverty household headcount index, Hermel Caza has the highest index among all Lebanese Cazas: Hermel, Ba'albek and Akkar rank among the poorest Cazas in Lebanon with more than 20% of households living below the absolute poverty level of 314USD income per household per month<sup>37</sup>.

Moreover, according to UNDP and MoSA's latest assessment: "Households affected by a combination of adverse factors face the highest risk of poverty". For example, a person's place of residence can interact with his labour-market profile to produce different welfare outcomes for individuals. The study goes on to indicate that when workers are classified by economic sector; agriculture and construction exhibit the largest shares of extremely poor workers. These considerations are relevant for the Bekaa Governorate, geographically isolated, where agricultural activities constitute the main occupation. The size and composition of the household can also have consequences on the poverty status – as evidenced by the report: "widowed heads of households with children are more likely to be poor"<sup>38</sup>.

**Box 17: Poverty**

	<i>Lebanon</i>	<i>Bekaa Governorate</i>	<i>Ba'albeck-Hermel</i>	<i>Hermel Caza</i>
<i>Average household income (1996)</i>	<i>1.026 USD/month</i>	<i>842 USD/month</i>		-
<i>Lower range of living conditions index (1996)</i>	<i>32.1%</i>	<i>40.6%</i>		-
<i>Extremely poor: less than USD 2.40 per capita per day (2004)</i>	<i>8%</i>	<i>10.81%</i>		-
<i>WB upper poverty line: less than USD 4 per capita per day – current exchange rate (2004)</i>	<i>28.5%</i>	-	<i>31%</i>	-
<i>Households living below the needs satisfaction index (1995)</i>	<i>7.2%</i>	-		<i>65.9%</i>
<i>Extreme income poverty household headcount (1999)</i>	<i>7%</i>			<i>22.2%</i>
<i>Individuals below the governmental absolute income poverty index of LBP 300.000 per month</i>			<i>28%</i>	

*CAS, 1997; IPC/UNDP, 2008: 6-7, 11, authors estimates from UNDP/MoSA, 2004-05; UNDP/MoSA 2008: 19; CDR/ESFD, 2002, in CRI, 2007, and in CDR/UNDP 2003: 7); MoSA/UNFPA, 1996 in CRI, 1998: ES-9.*

**Local Institutions**

Hermel Municipality dates back to 1898, while Qasr Municipality was established in 1963.

The Hermel Union of Municipalities was established on the thirteenth of December 2005, with decree n°15.938, one year later the Municipalities in Chawaghir, Kweikh and Juar el-Hashish were established. In 2006, the Independent Municipal Fund allocated to the 5 Municipalities of Hermel agglomeration 1970 billions Lebanese Pounds and 0.992 billions Lebanese Pounds to the Hermel Union of Municipalities<sup>39</sup>.

Public institutions are centred in Hermel town, except for a police station and a Civil Defence centre in Qasr<sup>40</sup>.

OMSAR research highlights the role of these Municipalities as local development focal points, in the context of a general inactivity by other public bodies and institutions.

Nevertheless, the capacity of these Municipalities is undermined by the lack of financial resources, preventing the employment of paid staff. They also suffer from the overlapping of municipal authority with other national agencies, causing the delay of local infrastructural projects<sup>41</sup>.

**Box 18: Municipalities**

	<i>Year</i>	<i>Council members</i>	<i>Makhatir</i>
<i>Hermel</i>	1898	21	10
<i>Qasr</i>	1963	15	3
<i>Chawaghir</i>	2004	12	2
<i>Kweikh</i>	2004	12	1
<i>Juar al-Hashish</i>	2004	9	1

*OMSAR, 2005*

Women's political representation is also an important indicator of the developmental capacity of local authorities. In the last elections, the women candidates of Bekaa reached the second highest country success rate after Nabatieh<sup>42</sup>.

A woman was elected as secretary of Kweikh Municipal Council in the Hermel agglomeration. This has been acknowledged by OMSAR's research, in concurrence with the presence of a number of women's organizations in Hermel, as an indicator of women's active participation in local development<sup>43</sup>.

**Box 19: Women's participation to local council elections 1996**

	<i>Lebanon</i>	<i>Bekaa</i>
<i>Number of women candidates</i>	353	25
<i>Number of women elected</i>	139	13
<i>Percentage of women elected</i>	39%	52%

*CRTD.A, 2006: 17*

**2. Commercial, Industrial and Craft establishments in Hermel agglomeration**

Economic activities in Hermel agglomeration are highly characterized by agriculture, as highlighted by data on land use and employment.

According to the LDP, development in agriculture is suffering from the absence of planning policies, high cost of production, difficulties in marketing of products, and the lack of local food processing industry<sup>44</sup>.

Trade, industry and crafts are marginal, though they are still relevant activities. Trade is affected by the lacks in infrastructure and partially relies on smuggling across the Syrian border. Crafts and industry are both limited in terms of employment, number, and size of establishments.

## **Crafts**

The study for the LDP highlights the absence of hand crafts tradition in the Hermel agglomeration. For example: metal processing, leather processing, and soap production are absent from Hermel though they're present elsewhere in the region. The crafts identified by the LDP in the framework of local development projects are olive oil production, soap production, home food processing, and carpet weaving.

Home made food processing is a well spread activity among Lebanese women- particularly in rural areas; it is mainly produced for household consumption. The rise in the demand of these products in the Lebanese market led to the establishment of women cooperatives in Qasr, Kweikh and Hermel.

Olive oil production in Hermel Caza is based on three oil-mills: a private one in Qasr, and two in Hermel.

The carpet market is affected by competition from the foreign production. A centre for carpet weaving was established in Hermel in 1973 by MoSA, and it is still active till now. It has graduated 40 girls between 2000 and 2004. Despite this, this line of production fails to develop because of the dominant trend among these graduates to adhere to their traditional roles in their families and not to develop their profession.

Other crafts that are present in the Hermel agglomeration are aluminium production and car repairs; where these professions are developed by apprenticeship and not supported by school training. The main crafts in al-Jord Mountain are the production of coal from wood, carried out through traditional techniques by poor families for very low revenues<sup>45</sup>. This activity has a negative impact on forest resources, contributing to deforestation and desertification of the mountains on the Syrian border.<sup>46</sup>

## **Industry**

Industry is a secondary activity represented in the region by very small enterprises, notably in the construction sector, with caves for the production of building materials. "Recently, three textile workshops were shut down while new caves were established.[...] The industry of caves started after the ban of illegal crops, and of production and trade of drugs in the early 90's".<sup>47</sup> This grew with the prohibition of excavation in other areas due to its environmental impact. The LDP highlights the role of these caves in employment and income generation for el-Jord inhabitants, and suggest avoiding their prohibition in the absence of alternative sources of income for the local population; it suggests accordingly organizing these activities around a set of legal norms focused on minimizing environmental damages.

## **Trade**

Trade, as most services (administration, health, etc.), is also mainly concentrated in Hermel town. The LDP study recorded: 800 shops, 10 fuel stations, 25 shoe shops, and 9 restaurants. It also recorded more than 37 restaurants on the Orontes riversides, and few coffee shops on the road to Akkar crossing el-Jord of el-Jaafar in Juar el-Hashish area.

The lack of infrastructure for market activities, such as public marketplaces and stock houses, prevents farmers from directly selling their products. In the breeding sector, the Municipality established a slaughter house and a market for cattle with the support of CHF.

Smuggling across the Syrian border is also a profitable business due to the difference in exchange rates and prices, it also depends on the demand of certain goods which are available in one country or the other.

### ***Survey findings***

The questionnaires used for the survey were designed to assess status and conditions of economic activities in Hermel agglomeration, according to four sets of indicators:

- a) Gender and age of respondents
- b) Economic performance
- c) Access to services and infrastructure
- d) Investment in facilities

In Kweikh, there are only two economic establishments; one of them is a recently established women's cooperative for food processing and sale, called "Assyndian". The two establishments were both surveyed, though not included in the calculations due to their limited number. Information about Kweikh is thus not present in the tables, but is presented below and compared to the other four Municipalities in each of the following paragraphs.

#### ***a. Gender and Age of Respondents***

Respondents to questionnaires were met in each establishment during the working hours. Although their identity does not necessarily get along with each establishment's owner, gender and age of respondents provides insights on the demography of the economically active population in the Hermel agglomeration. It also adds a profile to the source of information for the survey.

Overall, most respondents are in the age groups between 25 and 55 years old, with an important exception in Qasr, where the age group 18-25 reaches the highest percentage among the total number of respondents. In all Municipalities, except Juar el-Hashish- where they are equal, the age group 18-25 reaches a higher percentage than the 55-65 age groups.

The age group distribution of respondents in Hermel is quite balanced, and the 25-35 age group reaches the highest percentage (25.82%), while in Chawaghir and Juar el-Hashish respondents are concentrated in the age groups of 35-45 and 45-55.

No respondents rank in over 65 and under 18 age groups, except for low share in Hermel town.

Overall, the group of respondents is young; in Hermel and Qasr they are particularly younger than the respondents in Juar el-Hashish and Chawaghir.

In Kweikh, respondents belong to the age groups of 45-55 and 55-65, and it is interesting to highlight that the only shop-keeper working in Kweikh before the establishment of the women's cooperative is a relatively old man, while the woman representing the cooperative, though younger than the other respondent, still belong to a relatively advanced age group (Annexe 4: table 1).

In all four Municipalities, males are the larger majority of respondents, with higher participation than female respondents; in Juar el-Hashish followed by Chawaghir. Hermel town reaches the lowest percentage of female respondents among all the four Municipalities (Annexe 4: table 2).

### ***b. Economic performance***

The majority of establishments surveyed are commercial ones, with crafts in Hermel town and in Juar el-Hashish reaching, respectively, the highest and the lowest share of the total crafts' activities in the area. The industrial establishment have the highest share in Juar el-Hashish and Qasr and the lowest in Chawaghir.

In relation to crafts, the data does not account for the overall income generating activities- for example coal production which is a relevant source of income for Juar al-Hashish population (Annexe 4: table 3). In Kweikh, there used to be only one commercial establishment- a grocery store- but then the Assyndian Cooperative became a model of successful crafts activities run in the Hermel agglomeration in a short period of time.

### ***Employees***

The majority of establishments surveyed employ one person, and the percentage of establishments with two employees is higher than the percentage of establishments with "no employee". This is true in all Municipalities except for Hermel, which is distinguished by a higher percentage of one employee and "no employee" establishments compared to the other Municipalities. A significant number of respondents in Juar el-Hashish did not provide any answer about the number of their employees (Annexe 4: table 4). In Kweikh, the Assyndian Cooperative employs 25 women, while the previous existing grocery store is a small activity run only by its owner.

### ***Property***

A slight majority of the establishments surveyed own their location, with 46% of the establishments with a rented location. The percentage of rented properties is higher than the percentage of owned properties only in Hermel, whereas in Chawaghir the owned properties reach a 93% (Annexe 4: table 5). In Kweikh, the grocery is privately owned by the shop-keeper, while the women's cooperative location is rented.

### ***Income***

In terms of income, Hermel establishments show the highest disparities and the highest percentage of establishments earning more than 700.000 L.L.

a month. In Chawaghir a significant number of respondents did not answer this question (Annexe 4: table 6).

In Kweikh, the survey demonstrated a wide gap in income generation among the two surveyed establishments, with the women's cooperative achieving half the income of the grocery, notwithstanding the bigger size and scope of its business, as will be highlighted in the following.

### ***Reduction in income***

21% of the respondents did not report having faced any reduction in productivity and/or income in the last 4 years, only in Chawaghir the percentage rose to 56%, whereas Hermel and Qasr have the highest percentage of establishments with reduced productivity. Mainly, the cause behind this reduction is identified as the decrease in the purchasing power of clients. In Qasr a significant 15% of respondents addressed the inability to get workers as a cause (Annexe 4: table 7) for their reduction of income.

In Kweikh, the grocery store had reductions in income interpreted as a consequence of the decreased purchasing power of clients, while the women's cooperative is too young to provide a significant answer to this question.

### ***Access to market***

The majority of establishments surveyed sell their products in the same Municipality area only, with the highest percentage in Hermel with 93%, and a significant 41% of establishments serving the outskirts of the towns in Qasr (Annexe 4:table8). In Kweikh, the grocery store sells products only inside the village, while the women's cooperative was supported to even reach Beirut market through networking among different NGOs.

About half of the respondents access the Syrian market for business purposes, and the majority are from Juar el-Hashish and Qasr, while the people from Chawaghir access to the Syrian market reaches the lowest level, taking into account that a significant number of respondents in Chawaghir did not answer this question. The grocery store in Kweikh accesses the Syrian market, while the women's cooperative only use the agricultural products of their village.

### ***c. Access to Services and Infrastructure***

The location of surveyed establishments within each Municipality is about 49% in the centre of the town, and 51% on the peripheries. The majority of establishments in Qasr, Chawaghir and Juar el-Hashish are located in the centre of each settlement, while in Hermel about the same proportion, 62%, of establishments are located in peripheral locations (Annex 4:table 9). In Kweikh, the surveyed establishments are located side by side, and both hold a central location within the village built area.

In terms of accessibility, 68% of surveyed establishments are located on the main road: Chawaghir has the higher proportion of establishments located in secondary roads because of the presence of restaurants on the river side; location in the main road of each town reaches the highest percentages in

Qasr and Juar el-Hashish (Annexe 4: table10), while in Kweikh no main road is identifiable because of the limited dimensions of the built up area in the village..

### **Electricity**

The national agency for electricity, Electricité du Liban, serves 95% of the surveyed establishments. Around 33% of these establishments own private generators for additional provision, and 11% subscribe to a shared private generator. Almost 2% of surveyed establishments are not connected to the Electricité du Liban network, with the highest proportion in Chawaghir where 10% of the surveyed establishments count only on a private generator for their electricity consumption. In Kweikh both surveyed establishments rely on Electricité du Liban provision, while the grocery shop has an additional source of electricity, being provided by a private generator.

Juar el-Hashish and Qasr reach the highest shares of usage of private generators, in addition to Electricité du Liban service, while Hermel reaches the highest percentage of subscribers to shared generators (Annexe 4: table 11).

### **Water and sanitation**

Disparities in water provision within the Hermel agglomeration are wider than for other indicators: the majority of surveyed establishments in Hermel are served by the water network, while the majority of establishments in Chawaghir, Qasr and Juar el-Hashish use artesian wells. Chawaghir reaches the highest percentage of water provision by public fountains and private water reservoirs (Annexe 4: table12). In Kweikh, the grocery store collects water in a private reservoir, while the women's cooperative respondent reported that they're connected to the network of the water company.

The majority of surveyed establishments do not have overall toilet facilities, particularly in Qasr and Juar al-Hashish, whereas in Hermel and Chawaghir the percentage of establishments endowed with toilet rise above 40% (Annexe 4:table13). In Kweikh, only the cooperative has a private toilet, unloaded in a pit.

41% of the overall surveyed establishments have no sanitation, with the same group rising to 73% in Juar el-Hashish. Connection to the sewage network is available only in Hermel for 15% of the surveyed establishments. On the other hand, pits reach higher shares than no sanitation for the establishments, such as in Chawaghir. In Qasr, pits and no sanitation establishments have the same percentage (36% each), while a significant 24% of the respondents reported that they unload waste water in roads, valleys or rivers, and 17% of the respondents did not answer this question in Juar al-Hashish (Annex 4: table14).

### **Heating**

Combustibles used for heating in Hermel agglomeration are very varied: the establishments in Juar el-Hashish and Chawaghir reach over 60% using

electricity for heating, while the Hermel and Qasr establishments mostly use Diesel and Gas, probably because of the presence of gas station services. The highest percentage of establishments using wood for heating is in Qasr with 17% of the surveyed establishments, while coal is used only in Hermel and Chawaghir in 3.5% of the overall surveyed establishments (Annex 4: table15). In Kweikh, the grocery store uses coal, while the women's cooperative uses electricity- having less working load during winter time.

### ***Solid waste management***

Waste is mainly non-organic, clothing and organic reaching 89% altogether of the overall surveyed establishments, with variations among the different Municipalities- suggesting the need for further investigation of the issue, as well as for an awareness campaign ensuring the inhabitants knowledge of waste typologies. Qasr has the highest share for non-organic waste, while Juar el-Hashish has the highest share for organic waste and Hermel for clothing, whereas in Chawaghir the organic waste and non-organic waste have the same percentage (30% each) in addition to a significant 10% of establishments producing organic and non-organic waste. Production of hazardous industrial waste was acknowledged by 2% of the surveyed establishments, only in Hermel and Qasr (Annexe 4 :table16). In Kweikh, the grocery store produces mainly non-organic waste, while the food processing cooperative waste is mainly organic.

In terms of waste management, equal shares of establishments unload waste either on the road side in points identified by the neighbourhood for the collection of domestic waste, or in a dump site, altogether reaching over 95% of surveyed establishments overall. Qasr and Chawaghir have the higher shares for unloading in dump sites, while Hermel and Juar el-Hashish reach higher shares of establishments unloading waste on the road side (Annexe 4:table17). In Kweikh, both surveyed establishments unload their waste in a dump site.

### ***d. Investment in Facilities***

The surveyed commercial, crafts and industrial establishments' endowment of facilities is detailed in table 18. Overall, the majority of surveyed establishments are not endowed with any of the facilities identified: only endowment with refrigerators, television and service car rise above 30% of the establishments, and only endowment with telephones (mobile and land line) rise above 20% of establishments. Televisions reach significant shares in Hermel establishments, as radios do in Chawaghir. Refrigerators reach the highest percentage in Chawaghir, with a significant 80%, seemingly for the presence of restaurants on the river side, and also in Juar el-Hashish for the presence of butchers and cafes on the road to Akkar (Annexe 4:table18). In Kweikh, both surveyed establishments have a service car, while the grocery owns a service car in addition to a refrigerator. The women's cooperative is equipped with a computer and a television, beside the machines which are strictly used for food processing.

### **3.Social Centers in Hermel Town**

Cultural and social activities are almost absent in the rural areas and very limited in the towns, and social services are limited to charity.

Most social and cultural services are centred in Hermel town, although in Qasr there are around ten scouts and sports associations, and three projects of rural and responsible tourism which were developed into two rafting clubs in Chawaghir and one eco-lodge in al-Jord Mountains. A new B&B run by Assyndian Cooperative is going to start its activities in Kweikh, after the renovation of two mud houses with the support of ARCS and the Italian Cooperation under ROSS II program.

The LDP highlighted the absence of cultural activities in the whole Caza, as no public library, no cinema, no theatre was found even in the Caza capital at the time of that study.<sup>48</sup>

Nowadays, the Hermel Municipality has inaugurated the new municipal library after the rehabilitation of a building affected by long term decay, while the Cultural Association of Hermel has also opened a new centre and a library with the support of the Italian Cooperation under the ROSS I program.

These centres are focal points for cultural activities in Hermel town, as they organize courses, exhibitions and public events, in addition to the library services.

The LDP recorded five cultural clubs which organize occasional events and public debates on specific issues, and highlighted the role of the Hermel Municipality in promoting art and literary events, beside summer and sports camps. The LDP also recorded the presence of eight computer halls in Hermel town<sup>49</sup>.

Other social services by Islamic institutions address orphans, families of martyrs, the poor and the disabled.

#### ***Survey findings***

The questionnaires used for the survey were designed to assess the conditions and capacity of social and cultural centres in Hermel town, according to four sets of indicators:

- a) Gender and age of respondents
- b) Capacity and performance of the centre
- c) Access to services and infrastructure
- d) Investment in facilities

#### ***a. Gender and Age of Respondents***

Respondents to the questionnaires were met in each centre, and were entitled by the centre's directors to speak for the centre: although their identity does not necessarily match with the director of the centre, yet the gender and age of respondents provides insights on the demography of socially active population in the Hermel agglomeration, either as volunteers, or as

employees, in addition to a profile of the source of information for the survey.

Over 71% of the respondents are males, while the age group 18-25 reaches the highest percentage: young males appear as such important actors in the local social activism, although a consistent number of respondents did not answer the question about age. Nonetheless, field work highlighted the relevant contribution of women, particularly young women, in local social work and activism, even though they might have not been appointed as informants for this survey by directors of centres (Annexe 5: table 19, 20).

### ***b. Capacity and performance of the centres***

Respondents to questionnaires identified only three types of beneficiaries: i) people in general, ii) the ill and the disabled, iii) children and orphans. The first two categories of beneficiaries are the most representative, covering about 90% of surveyed centres, which highlights a lack of specialized services to vulnerable sectors of the society- for example the elderly, the illiterate and women.

Among the surveyed centers, only two specifically targeted children and orphans as beneficiaries, accounting for 14% of the total (Annexe 5: table 21).

The activities carried out by the surveyed centres are mainly public events, public services and training: two centres provide training for people in general and for children respectively, while the rest organize either public services or social events, targeting different categories of beneficiaries among those listed above (Annexe 5: table 22).

The number of employees in each centre varies between 2 employees to 40 employees, with three centres with no employees at all. The number of volunteers mobilized by each centre also varies widely between 10 and 100 volunteers, with six centres declaring that they don't rely on any volunteers' contributions in their work. Two of the three centres with no employees mobilize the higher numbers of volunteers, 50 and 100 volunteers each. The centre with the highest number of employees does not mobilize any volunteers, but the other five centres with no volunteers have relatively low numbers of employees, all below ten people, suggesting that a significant number of organizations rely on limited paid staff for their activities, given that the few organizations with relatively higher numbers of volunteers focus on volunteer work as their only source of human resources (Annexe 5: table 23, 24).

Surveyed centres are equally distributed among those establishments owned as private property of the relative organization, and the rented establishments (Annexe 5: table 25).

### ***c. Access to Services and Infrastructure***

Surveyed establishments are equally distributed among peripheral and central locations in Hermel town (Annexe 5: table 26), as well as among main and secondary roads (Annexe 5: table 27).

Electricity is provided by Electricité du Liban in all cases but one, relying on a private generator (Annexe 5: table 28), while the network of the water company serves all surveyed establishments but two, relying respectively on an artesian well and on a public fountain (Annexe 5: table 29).

All of the surveyed centres are provided with toilet facilities (Annexe 5: table 30), and they all use pits for sanitation (Annexe 5: table 31). Diesel is used for heating in all surveyed centres but one, which uses gas (Annexe 5: table 32).

The majority of surveyed centres send their waste directly to a dump site, while three send it to an incinerator, and only one centre leaves it on the road side to be collected by the Municipality services (Annexe 5: table 33).

### ***d. Investment in facilities***

As detailed in table 34, social and cultural centres in Hermel town are equipped with a variety of facilities.

Land lines are available in the large majority of surveyed centres, and so are mobile phones though for a slightly lower percentage. Interestingly, image and film projectors are the third most diffused facility, followed by refrigerators, radios and faxes. Computers and leisure games are available in half of the surveyed centres, while service cars, copy machines and sports games all fall below 50% of surveyed centres, though not lower than 36%.

Given that service cars and copy machines are the least overall present facilities, available in five centres on fourteen, the surveyed centres' endowment appears to be fit to each centre specific vocation, although limited computer's shares suggest that capacity in ICT could be improved (Annexe 5: table 34).

#### **4. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The present survey carried out in the Hermel agglomeration, together with the information collected from existing literature, presents a picture of marginality and deprivation. In particular, data presented in the latest report carried out by the UNDP "Poverty, Growth and Income distribution in Lebanon" published in 2008 confirm the interconnection of the different socio-economic features addressed in this report in determining deprivation and poverty. These conditions are mainly due to the area's geographical isolation, and to the relatively weak State intervention in terms of investments in infrastructure and services. This weakness is also related to the preservation of traditional patterns of socialization among the local population, with the prevalence of clan affiliation patterns.

Local economic activities appear to lack diversification, with a predominant agricultural sector which is underdeveloped, since most of the agricultural land in the area is left uncultivated. According to UNDP <sup>50</sup>, 20.39% of working people in the Bekaa are employed in the agricultural sector. This percentage rises even higher if we consider the data identifying the percentage of people working in transportation (6.89%) and trade (21.19%), which are sectors related to agricultural activities.

According to the survey findings, the incidence of groceries on the total number of trade establishments reflects a lack of specialization in the local market, which compels the local communities to find employment in activities such as caves and charcoal production through deforestation, producing a negative environmental impact on the area.

Overall, the area presents a contradiction among the variety of micro climates and soils, the richness in water and other natural resources as flora and fauna, as well as in archaeological heritage on one hand, and the deprivation of its population in terms of socio-economic development, and access to infrastructure and services on the other. One data among the many that confirm this picture is that 39,23% of heads of households in the survey's area are illiterate and extremely poor; representing the worst score in the country<sup>51</sup>

Moreover, it is interesting to highlight that, according to UNDP, 33.85% of better off households consider themselves middle class to poor and 27,46% of them consider themselves as poor, showing that they are extremely vulnerable<sup>52</sup> The contradiction between resources and socio-economic status should be the primary focus of local institutions and other stakeholders striving to improve the socio economic conditions of the local population, as it highlights how poverty and deprivation are not necessarily the structural result of a lack in resources, inasmuch as they might be counteracted by behavioural shifts in the management of local resources and, ultimately, in the local population approach to development. Social activism, and particularly women's activism, as observed in Hermel town, provides a fertile ground to promote a wider awareness of the potential benefits of the environmental wealth of the area, as well as a key condition for local authorities committed to prevent marginalization, environmental hazards and related waste of local resources.

### **General Recommendations:**

The data collected and the tables produced throughout the survey can serve as excellent formats for **regular monitoring and information updating**, at the Documentation Centre under construction in the Hermel Federation of Municipalities' office.

Hermel area is commonly considered as a rural area, kept aside from urban pressure, and marked by specific challenges to the development of the agricultural sector. This consideration is often present in local development policies that run the risk to overlook the **influence of urbanization** on local socio-economic conditions, and ultimately on the necessary improvements to be brought up in the agricultural sector. If uncultivated agricultural land in the Caza would be the focus of careful policies, then urban planning should pay particular attention to the concentration of urban services in Hermel town compared to the surrounding area- which is left mostly under served. The progress of such process of centralization should be carefully monitored in the light of the NPMPLT recommendation to lighten urban pressure on the Hermel agglomeration to direct it towards southern agglomerations of Ba'albek and Zahle.

### **Socio-Economic**

The **patterns of socialization** that are dominant in the area, as described in the LDP, should be taken into account in the implementation of any future projects, as they not only highlight the potential challenge of clan conflicts faced by municipal authorities, but also the potential resources implicit in the relevant influence of political or associative belonging on patterns of affiliation, meaning that social activism and political participation play an important role in local socialization.

Considering the limited access of women property, the low shares of women's participation in the labour market, and the concentration of female labour force in the population shares living below minimum wage, **women's participation** should be encouraged as a fundamental resource in development, both in terms of social activism, and economic performance. Peculiar conditions of vulnerability have been identified in the situation of female head of households, who often are widows, illiterate, work in agriculture, and belong to older age groups. Nonetheless, the experience of Assyndian food-processing Cooperative as well as the presence of a significant number of women's association in Hermel- as highlighted in the LDP- suggest that women's contribution to local development has already been translated into good practices. These initiatives should be strengthened and further developed.

Estimation on **employment rates** of the Hermel population should be read in the light of the specific sectors with the highest percentages of employed

people; since agriculture and construction represent both the most important sources of employment in Hermel agglomeration, as well as the sectors concentrating the highest percentages of workers living below the minimum wage. The role of the caves in the mountainous area in raising employment rates among villagers should be also considered in the light of the income levels reached in the construction sector.

### **Basic Infrastructure & the Environment**

The improvement of basic infrastructure and awareness raising on several issues surrounding infrastructure could have a strong relevance for the local development of the 5 Hermel Municipalities surveyed.

Firstly the **use of fuels for heating** should be monitored and an assessment of the **environmental impacts** of the different fuels used in the Hermel agglomeration should be conducted.

Secondly, the **sanitation devices** adopted by the villagers should be monitored and awareness on the regulations on the safety distance between septic pits and underground water springs should be promoted among the population.

On the same line, it is important to monitor the irregular dump sites and the **waste produced** in the Hermel agglomeration, while spreading awareness on the different typologies of waste, to promote self-monitoring among the local population, particularly in the Orontes river basin. Even though domestic waste collection appears more effective in Bekaa than in the rest of the country - according to UNDP in better off and poor houses there is a high percentage of indoor collection, (53,63% and 60,18% respectively)<sup>53</sup>.

Lastly, **the maintenance and improvement of internal roads** connecting the 5 Municipalities of Hermel should be promoted, in addition to the improvements in the trans-Governorate road network envisioned in the NPMPLT. Municipalities lack the resources to takeover these tasks; nonetheless their capacity to deal with the lack of the road network and public transportation is the key to local development.

### **Capacity Building**

Capacity building for municipalities, identified as local development focal points, is needed to enable them to take on their role as service providers. The capacity building should focus on **increased access to financial and human resources** as well as **improved coordination with national agencies and line Ministries**.

Specific activities to enhance the capacity of the population and particularly of the youth - who are often entering the labour market at a relatively young age - should be put in place and include professional vocational trainings and IT trainings that could easily be conducted in the social centres once the ICT equipment are improved.

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## 6. Annexes:

- Annexe 1: Questionnaire for economic establishments
- Annexe 2: Questionnaire for social establishments
- Annexe 3: Municipality wise information from web sources
- Annexe 4: Survey findings: Comparative tables on economy
- Annexe 5: Survey findings: Tables on social centres
- Annexe 6: Survey findings: Hermel tables on economy
- Annexe 7: Survey findings: Chawaghir tables on economy
- Annexe 8: Survey findings: Qasr tables on economy
- Annexe 9: Survey findings: Juar al-Hashish tables on economy

## Endnotes

- 1 See Annexes 1 and 2.
- 2 Source: [www.localiban.org](http://www.localiban.org)
- 3 Source: OMSAR, 2005.
- 4 Source: NPMLT, 2004: II-17.
- 5 Source: MoSA and UNDP, 2006.
- 6 Source: OMSAR, 2005.
- 7 Source: OMSAR, 2005.
- 8 Source: NPMLT, 2004: II-17, IV-5.
- 9 Source: NPMLT, 2004: II-15.
- 10 Source: NPMLT, 2004: II-16, I-25.
- 11 Source: NPMLT, 2004: IV-4.
- 12 Source: OMSAR, 2005.
- 13 Source: OMSAR, 2005.
- 14 Source: OMSAR, 2005.
- 15 Source: NPMLT, 2004: I-25.
- 16 Source: NPMLT, 2004: IV-66.
- 17 Source: NPMLT, 2004: I-25.
- 18 Source: OMSAR, 2005: 7.
- 19 Source: OMSAR, 2005: 6.
- 20 Source: OMSAR, 2005.
- 21 Source: MoSA and UNFPA, 1996 in CRI, 1998: 3-14.
- 22 Source: OMSAR, 2005: 15.
- 23 Source: MoSA and UNDP, 2006: 47.
- 24 Source: MoSA and UNFPA, 1996 in CRI, 1998.
- 25 Source: MoSA and UNDP, 1998, in NAP: 83.
- 26 Source: MoSA and UNDP, 2006: 41.
- 27 Source: MoSA and UNDP, 2006: 48.
- 28 Source: OMSAR, 2005.
- 29 Source: MoSA and UNDP, 2006: 54.
- 30 Source: MoSA and UNFPA, 1996 in CRI, 1998: ES-9.
- 31 Source: OMSAR, 2005: 21.
- 32 Source: OMSAR, 2005.
- 33 Source: OMSAR, 2005.
- 34 Source: IPC/UNDP, 2008: 11, authors estimates based on CAS, UNDP, MoSA, Living Conditions and Households Budget Survey, 2004-5.
- 35 Source: MoSA and UNFPA, 1996 in CRI, 1998: ES-9.
- 36 Source: CDR-ESFD, 2002, in CDR-UNDP, 2003:7.
- 37 Source: ESFD 2002 in NPMLT, 2004: II-15.
- 38 Source: MoSA and UNDP, August 2008: 22, 23.
- 39 Source: [www.localiban.org](http://www.localiban.org)
- 40 Source: OMSAR, 2005: 9.
- 41 Source: OMSAR, 2005.
- 42 Source: CRTD.A, 2006: 17.
- 43 Source: OMSAR, 2005: 9.
- 44 Source: OMSAR, 2005: 25, 30.
- 45 Source: OMSAR, 2005: 32.
- 46 Source: OMSAR, 2005: 32, 34.
- 47 As highlighted by the Mayor of Juar al-Hashish during a field trip.
- 48 Source: OMSAR, 2005: 18.
- 49 Source: *ibidem*.
- 50 Source: UNDP and MoSA 2008:129
- 51 Source: UNDP and MoSA, 2008: 112
- 52 Source: UNDP and MoSA 2008:154
- 53 Source: UNDP and MoSA 2008:144













