



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Munjiz (Akkar)

Lebanese Maronite Order

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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By Lebanese Maronite Order



Funding Needs: **\$ 480,000**

Background

Our Lady of the Citadel is an iconic Christian site in Munjiz, Akkar at the Lebanese Syrian borders. It dates back to the Crusades. In late 19th Century the Jesuits established a school. In 1925, the Jesuits Fathers handed over the Lebanese Maronite Order the institution to continue the educational mission.

During the civil war the Christians emigrated from the remote region because of lack of economic opportunity and fragile security. It is worth mentioning that Akkar is one of the most impoverished governorate in Lebanon with the highest unemployment rate. Though it enjoys a lot of resources, not the least its rich soil and beautiful nature.

In 2011, the Monastery was rehabilitated and new building was constructed to provide professional and vocational education to the youth of the region. In the same year, the Lebanese Maronite Order signed a partnership agreement with the Directorate of Technical Education at the Ministry of Education by virtue of which the latter was to provide at his cost the vocational training curriculum as well as the trainers.

The vocational training center

The vocational training center proved to be a success. In less than 5 years 17 jobs were created filled by dwellers from the surrounding holding logistic and administrative positions at the center. The center offered training programs to more than 160 youth coming from Munjiz and villages in the vicinity. Some came from Christian villages in the neighboring Syria. In 2017 the total number of students who attended vocational training and education sessions reached 235.

The Center is currently offering the following vocational and education programs:

- Pedagogy and pre-school Education
- Nursing & Laboratory Studies
- Auditing & Accounting
- Interior Design & Graphic Design
- Beauty counselling (Hair & Make up)
- Carpenter Assistant
- Cook and Chef Assistant
- Topography
- Electricity & Mechanicals

A message of hope

Most importantly building a new center brought hope to the Christian dwellers in the region and offered them a place to gather and exchange. The move was to inspire hope to a population that suffered in the late years marginalization, security threats, and lack of opportunities. With the Covent being rebuilt, those who left their home started to come back and restore their houses. The Covent is today a meeting point for all Christian villages inhabitants in the region. It is today a living example of the Church presence across the whole Lebanon and its faith in development and education

A sustainable development center

Develop vocational training; establish an agriculture pole; boost eco-tourism

The project we present today is to build an extension to the existing technical institute in order to increase its capacity. This would mean to offer additional training, to serve a bigger number of youth in the region. It will also introduce the following new specializations to better meet the job market demands:

- Electricity & Mechanics
- Computer Repair
- Sanitary
- Computer
- Cellphones Repair
- Solar Power

A new agriculture program will be introduced as well in partnership with the Ministry of Education. This would prepare a new generation of farmers to take advantage of Akkar rich and diversified soil and its natural resources. The agriculture program will cover the following topics:

- Planting and Seeding
- Irrigation
- Trimming
- Pollination
- Packaging
- Distribution
- Operation of farm machinery
- Fertilization and crop protection
- Weed identification and insect control
- Propagation
- Harvesting
- Storage
- Farm book-keeping
- Marketing of crops and forward contracting

A land next to the institute will be available for students to put into practice the newly acquired agricultural methods and techniques. This field of experiment will result in higher quality of crops and export possibilities

The building extension will include a Guest House of around 10 rooms that will cater for visitors and tourists who are interested in religious and agricultural tourism.

The Budget

The Institute will start generating income from the nominal fee it will be receiving from the students' and from crop sales, as well as from the fees to be paid by the visitors at the Guest House.

The project cost is evaluated at: \$555,000. It includes the building extension construction cost, in addition to the operating costs for the first year. An amount of \$75,000 has already been paid to cover the technical studies and the foundations work. The remaining funding need is \$480,000.

A Model for the future

The Convent in Lebanon has played a key socio-economic role in addition to its religious mission. In the past, it used to act as a distribution center for farmers in the surrounding offering them a space to store their products and a vehicle to sell their harvest and obtain seeds and fertilizers.

The convents were the linchpin of Lebanese economy and the underlying infrastructure of a thriving Christian community. In achieving a sustainable development center, Al Munjiz project could serve as a benchmark for a multitude of Christian convents abandoned and lacking resources.

The opportunity is therefore to turn these convents into thriving economic local anchors, building on each of their respective regions competitive edge and offering services that match global trends. It is one additional milestone in reviving our cultural and economic heritage and strengthening Christian presence in Lebanon.



Further Information about



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