



Risk Prevention and Management Support to Al-Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve

General Information and Testimonials



The Italian Cooperation project **“Risk Prevention and Management Support to Al-Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve in Lebanon”** began in 2009 and was based on the urgent need to develop a stronger capacity in preventing and fighting forest fires in Lebanon. From 2005 to 2008 forest fires burned almost 30% of Lebanon’s forests despite the efforts of both public and private sectors. The Al-Shouf Cedar Reserve needed a more professional approach to minimize the risk from forest fires. The Reserve staff, in collaboration with Italian Cooperation experts, organized a technical mission with the Italian Civil Protection Department (DPC) and Cima Foundation, the main Italian actors in territorial management and natural risks prevention, in order to define the main needs to be met. This first step of the project was designed to protect and preserve the Al-Shouf Cedar Reserve, thereby enhancing the conservation of one of the most important Lebanese sites through the fire prevention and the development of an effective managerial and promotional strategy. Based on the technical results of the DPC and Cima Foundation, and jointly implemented by the Italian Cooperation and the Al-Shouf Cedar Society, the project framework included the following goals:

Promoting the development of Al-Shouf Cedar Reserve, enhancing the technical and practical capacity to prevent and fight the forest fires and other natural catastrophes that could affect the territory.

In collaboration with DPC and Cima Foundation experts, the project supplied fire-fighting infrastructure and equipment, provided professional training to local staff working on fires, and offered technical assistance in estimating and positioning the needed infrastructures.

Developing and enhancing the service and managerial structure in order to create conditions for increasing the local economical opportunities and promoting the social, economical and environmental heritage of all the area.

Through the promotion of national and international partnerships and technical training within the framework of the project, the Al-Shouf Cedar Reserve improved its knowledge of territorial management and development of social and cultural heritage. At the same time, the project worked on a visibility campaign, promotional events, and tourist services.



Promote the Al-Shouf Cedar Reserve synergy with national and international donors and actors working on environmental sector in developing strategies and activities concerning the infrastructure and services network needed to reach an integrated sustainable development.

Jointly implemented by the Italian Cooperation and the Al-Shouf Cedar Society, the project worked in full coordination and partnership with several important organizations and donors such as GTZ, AFD and IUCN. The project created a strong network with public institutions and private companies in integrating the equipment of Reserve with all the main infrastructures and services needed.



Restoration of Park House in Maasser El-Shouf

in order to minimize the costs related to logistics and office activities, the Al-Shouf Cedar Reserve aimed to find a new building as new headquarter. Thanks to AFD funds and Maasser El-Shouf Municipality support, an old traditional house, a model of Levantine/Ottoman architecture, was bought in Maasser el Shouf. From November 2009 to March 2010, the Park House was completely rehabilitated through funding from the Italian Cooperation, and in collaboration with the Directorate General of Antiquities. The work was executed mainly by local craftsmen experienced in traditional stone and iron work. Then, in September 2010 the Park House was fully equipped. A sustainable solar energy system, covering lighting and computer activity for 6 hours per day, were installed in September 2010 on the roof. Furthermore, Avatar an Italian architectural firm, organized a training session with local carpenters about the use of recycled materials in construction and designing furniture. The furniture was finalized by local carpenters using recycled wood coming from the Maaser area – thereby introducing another model of sustainability and alternative work methodology. Park House is thus the symbol of local natural, cultural and social heritage while providing the focal point for people who want to visit or study the Reserve.

Rehabilitation of Niha road

In collaboration with the Niha Municipality, this strategic road, access to one of the five Reserve entrances, has been repaved with natural stones in order to make it accessible to visitors and agricultural machinery, as requested by the local community. The availability of an entrance in Niha is extremely important for the promotion of tourism, due to the presence of interesting geological, religious and archaeological sites, in particular the Fakhreddine Fort, an important historical national site.



Rehabilitation of old trails and creation of new trails:

In collaboration with municipalities of Reserve, the project enhanced the trail network inside the Reserve, and during 2009 all the road and trail signs were renewed, using more sustainable materials and improving the sign positions.

Multi-media eco-touristic map in GPS and GoogleEarth format:

Thanks to the technical assistance of an expert in GIS and map design from the University of Bologna, the Al-Shouf Cedar Reserve is able to offer through GoogleEarth and GPS tools, an integrated multimedia map. These tools are downloadable from the Al-Shouf Cedar Reserve website and show all the services (entrances, hiking trails, mountain bike trails, rivers, guesthouses, restaurants, sale-points of Al-Shouf Cedar Reserve products, info-points, etc) provided within the protected area. This is a very innovative tourist tool that meets the needs of a new generation of visitors who would prefer an environmental-friendly map that avoids the use of paper.

Prak house

Philippe Audi, Architect manager of ParkHouse Rehabilitation

The rehabilitation of Park House was developed in an ideal condition of local and international partnership and support, and as technics and materials specifically chosen and adopted for the activity. The technics and materials chosen, like natural local stones, recycled wood, and iron-works, collected all the traditional knowledge representing the key of success of this rehabilitation; the integration of all these components represented a model that could be adopted all over Lebanon for preserving the traditional architectural heritage and the local knowledge concerning traditional technics and methodologies. The Park House rehabilitation has shown how the recovering of these resources is essential in restoring the community sense of belonging to the territory.



Nicola Santini, AVATAR Studio, trainer and designer of recycled wood furnitures

During the implementation of all the activities in which I was involved, three main elements impressed me very much: the openness of Italian Cooperation to the experimentation of architectural design with recycled materials; the energy, the confidence and the operative optimism of Shouf Cedar Reserve staff; and the enthusiasm and dedication of Shouf carpenters in adopting an innovative approach and methodology; after the initial skepticism, they get a full ownership of the project through a full awareness of recycling advantages.

Fadi Bou Wadi, Carpenter of the ParkHouse recycled wood furnitures

My cooperation with the Reserve started a long time ago, but the Italian project gave us the opportunity to learn how to benefit from old wood. When I started we were not sure what the results would be. In fact **"I did not believe in that kind of work"**, but with the support of Nicola, who became a close friend to us, we produced high quality pieces of furniture that we are proud of. Thanks to the Reserve and the Italian Cooperation for giving us that wonderful opportunity.



TRAINING

Stefania Petrosillo, Responsible of Federparchi International Cooperation Office

The cooperation between Italian and Lebanese protected areas, formally started with the partnership agreement among FederParchi, Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo Lazio e Molise and Shouf Cedar Reserve, and hopefully in the future other Italian and Lebanese actors, is an important step for the exchange of knowledge and learning. The challenge that each natural protected area has to face may seem different depending on social, political and cultural context, but today, in the Mediterranean area, there are similar problems and objectives. The most important goal remains to establish a better coexistence between human activity and biodiversity protection.

Faisal Abu-Izzeddin – Protected Area Senior Consultant

Going to Italy on the Italian Cooperation sponsored study tour in 2009 was like going home. The mountains of Abruzzo and the coastline of Italy reminded us of Lebanon. However, it was the kindness of our hosts that made it memorable. Their knowledge, and experience, in managing nature reserves and human communities living in those reserves was what attracted our attention.

Sawsan Bou Fakhreddine, Director of AFDC

The contribution of this project to forest fire fighting, mostly in terms of infrastructure and equipment, is a concrete step in increasing the effectiveness of the fire fighting strategy all over Lebanon. The successful collaboration between the local community, AFDC, WWF Italy, and the Italian Cooperation led to a success story with a positive environmental, social, and economic impact.

Antonello Pollutri, protected areas management expert of WWF Italy

Experience, knowledge, hospitality, friendship is what the Shouf people gave to me during the days of the training. I found in them all that I consider necessary to improve the local community conditions of life and at the same time preserve the unique heritage of biodiversity of Shouf Reserve.

Nizar Hani, Project Coordinator - Al-Shouf Cedar Reserve

The Al-Shouf Cedar Reserve after the input from the Italian Cooperation is a different and better Reserve. The Italian project gave us the opportunity to learn from an to share our experience with many Italian professionals in different fields (protected area management, GIS, environmental awareness, environmental friendly infrastructure, forest fire fighting, etc). We also established important cooperation with different partners in Italy - mainly the Abruzzo National Park and the Federation of the Parks.



In Lebanon we worked with Grand Cinema, LARI and Ministry of Education. The Italian project in cooperation with the French AFD purchased, rehabilitated, and equipped the Park House which will become the headquarters of the Al-Shouf Cedar Reserve management team.

LOCAL COMMUNITY

Alberto Mazzucchelli, coordinator of Brama professional group

The "Watching Tower" workshop in Shouf was a chance for our group to test an innovative approach on the field of territorial project design. The activities implemented with the Reserve staff and the students from the local schools produced excellent results even over what we expected, as confirmed also by the teachers. The participated design of the project, executed and developed with the local community and inside the local community, within a "new laboratory" created as space of exchange among different cultures and experiences, is the most real and concrete occasion to build a place and a future in which is possible believe in a more open and peaceful society. This is the most precious lesson we learnt from the local community and the Italian and Lebanese professionals that shared with us a so innovative experience.



Fanar Samar Labban, Director of Al-Fanar Psychiatric Hospital

Taking into consideration that psychiatric patients seldom go out of the institution as well as the fear of other people receiving them, the trip to Shouf was a success. The patients were so happy to do the drive in the bus, to see scenarios and particularly to visit the site of Shouf. We had with us 50 patients mixed between men and women and 2 nurses apart from me and Sandra, my assistant. At first they were worried and scared but as the drive started they calmed down and started singing. The whole event went very smooth even though the weather was hot and there were walking distances and some of the patients were not equipped with proper walking shoes. The most amazing outcome, for us that is, is that we received a confirmation that they considered Fanar their home. This is so because at the end of the trip when they got a bit tired and we were heading back they all were happy to go back home to rest. Accordingly we are now gathering money from parents to raise a budget to take as many as we can on other outings. This outing calmed them and satisfied them for at least 10 days, they would sit and discuss about it. Furthermore, it created a tie between them which we feel is extremely important when you live in collectivity.



Schools – Samih Abdel Samad

It was a rich experience for us as teachers and students to work with the Italian BRAMA team for one week, and to design an observation area to be established in the Shouf Biosphere Reserve. Everyone was working together. The environmental club members in the school were happy to prepare healthy food for the whole group, and even the parents participated in that activity. The main output of the workshop were wonderful colored drawings and designs. However, most important of all, we learned together that the border of the Al-Shouf Cedar Reserve starts at the border of our school's playground. Thanks to the Italian team for all their efforts, and for sharing that wonderful experience with us.





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