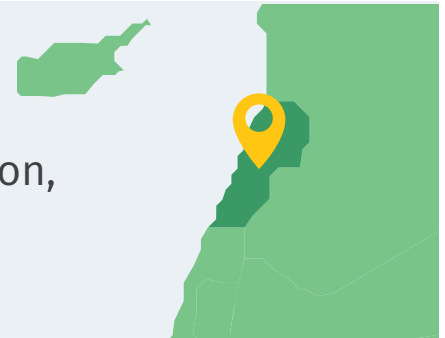


FIRE RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

The Association for Forests, Development and Conservation (AFDC), a Lebanese non-profit and non-governmental organisation, is **helping vulnerable communities to build resilience against wildfires.**



Qaraoun valley in West Bekaa, Lebanon. Photo: AFDC team.

LOCATION

West Bekaa, Lebanon

ACTORS

Local community and civil defence members, local authorities, AFDC

CHALLENGE

High risk of forest fires in many villages of the West Bekaa district in Lebanon, coupled with low prevention and response capacities at the local level, make this region highly vulnerable to wildfires.

Although a national strategy for forest fire management exists in Lebanon, support for communities to improve fire management capacities at local scale is needed.

BACKGROUND

West Bekaa is a district situated in the southern part of the Bekaa valley in Lebanon, with a population of more than 65,000 people. Large areas of the region are occupied by forests and other diverse natural and cultural landscapes.

The West Bekaa region is highly vulnerable to wildfires. This is caused by weak management of forests coupled with ignitions caused mainly by negligent or intensive human activities.

In West Bekaa, a big percentage of the population lives under the poverty line. The region also hosts a significant number of Syrian refugees, who often reside in informal settlements near agricultural lands, and depend heavily on forest resources, such as firewood for heating and cooking. This means that while local communities increase pressure on forest resources, they are also more vulnerable to the effects of major fire events.

Against this background it is alarming that an increasing number of fires and longer fire seasons are expected in Lebanon in the future.



The Association for Forests, Development and Conservation (AFDC), a Lebanese non-profit and non-governmental organisation, intends to increase community resilience against forest fires in West Bekaa district by improving local level fire management capacities.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH

Reforestation builds good relations

AFDC has a long history and expertise in forest fire management in Lebanon, including risk assessments and mapping, training, awareness raising and participatory strategic planning with local community stakeholders. In the past two years, AFDC has implemented a reforestation and forest management project in the West Bekaa region which has helped the team to collect important data from the area to identify villages with most important forest fire risk and to create good relations with the targeted communities.

Focus on local level capacities

AFDC has designed a project taking place in the West Bekaa district to increase local level capacities to wildfire management. The project objective, developed in collaboration with two Unions of Municipalities, Qaraoun Lake and Al Sahel, is to draft a local level fire management plan for the Bekaa governorate and provide local communities with the knowledge and resources to implement the plan.

Engaging locals in fire management

Distinctive to the national fire management strategy, the local plan will directly involve local authorities and local stakeholders in a forest fire risk committee, which will be responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the fire plan. **AFDC**, together with international stakeholders, intends to hold capacity building sessions for the local committee members to develop a local forest fire management plan compatible with the national strategy. It is hoped that the local and participatory approach will increase sustainability of the project and durability of its results.

“ Improving local readiness to forest fires is imperative for successful national fire management programs. ”

– **AFDC** management team

About AFDC

The **Association for Forests, Development and Conservation (AFDC)** was established in 1993 to achieve sustainable conservation of natural resources, raise awareness and build capacities to contribute to the national efforts for better environmental management.



FAO, with the help of local organisations (including AFDC) is enhancing biodiversity, managing combustible vegetation and maintaining seedlings in Anjar, Bekaa Valley, in an effort to support displaced Syrians and vulnerable Lebanese. Photo: FAO

