

INVIGORATING ARMENIAN COMMUNITIES IN LEBANON

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Fulfilling DiasporArm's mission to accumulate the resources of institutions and individuals, to raise socio-economic level of Armenians in the homeland and the Diaspora, a DiasporArm team visited Lebanon in October and December 2022.

The team met with numerous community leaders and organizations' representatives as well as several schools in Beirut and Anjar to study and develop economic initiatives for the communities. DiasporArm has recruited key individuals to form an advisory council to gather information and coordinate the development of the projects. This advisory council will begin to compile a needs-assessment for each project. They will also recruit professionals to prepare business plans, recruit a communications and marketing team, as well as a grant writer to ensure the projects are sufficiently funded. Each project will have a board of trustees, be financed and managed independently.

The DiasporArm team conducted meetings in Beirut and identified three economic opportunities for the Burj Hammoud community. The first, to address the continual energy crisis, provide solar panels to public buildings for energy security and reduced interruptions to operations. Second, develop a co-working space with generators to provide reliable electricity and Wi-Fi for students, self-employed, remote or freelance workers, using the Impact Hub franchise model. The co-working space will utilize available community owned property and will offer mentoring and seminar spaces. Third, establish a Fablab in association with a local university's engineering department (A Fab Lab, or digital fabrication laboratory, a place to play, to create, to mentor and to invent: a place for learning and innovation.)

DiasporArm met with the Impact hub management in Armenia where there are currently two locations, in Yerevan and Syunik, and shared with Rev. Sebouh Terzian, Director of CAHL who is leading the feasibility plan of establishing an Impact Hub location in Burj Hammoud on the CAHL campus.

Regarding the need for solar panels, DiasporArm supports the work of Raffi Parseghian who has competitive sources for Chinese produced solar panels, cargo and import options as well as local installers. DiasporArm is connecting community leaders with Raffi to participate in group purchase and installation rates.



For the Anjar community, the need is to keep talent local while also attracting individuals and families. The discussions centered on providing training and creating employment opportunities, three separate programs were suggested. Cultivating in-demand skilled remote workers by establishing an institution to provide training in IT, communication, graphic design, video editing, and social media management (SMM) was the first solution identified. Second, to develop high quality, unique handcrafts to be marketed sold internationally providing jobs mostly

to women. In addition, to make the products more attractive to global markets it was suggested pursuing fair trade and fair labor credentials.

And finally, cultivate agrobusiness ventures around fruit derived products, specifically apples which are amply available. "Beyond the many hardships which afflicted widely Lebanon, Anjar and its farmer were further hit by the 'apple tragedy'. There is no demand. The apples of Anjar cover the ground", posted Yessayi Havatian on Facebook on Oct 11, 2022.

DiasporArm team members met Hrand Karapetyan, the founder of Armenia's Kanach group, which cultivates 50 hectares of orchards, utilizing advanced irrigation systems, has cold storage facilities for 3,500 tons of crops allowing for a year-round supply of fruits on the market. Beyond producing apples, Kanach Group processes the fruit, ensuring organic and waste-free production of, vinegar, juice products, dried fruit, and market demanded products such as carb free apple chips (see here) Philanthropists Arthur Nazarian and Hagop Demirdjian have purchased mature orchards in Anjar to ensure lands and the production remains in the hands of the Armenian community. Anjar has farmlands with trees, water, energy, labor.

Since the December meetings, DiasporArm is working on a joint venture project between Anjar farmlands, Lebanese entrepreneurs and the Kanach group from Armenia to develop fruit cultivating, refrigerating, and processing facilities to market products cultivated and developed by Armenians, to for export.

DiasporArm is proud to provide updates on these critical projects for the Armenian communities of Lebanon. Stay tuned about these and other initiatives bridging individuals and organizations to advance global Armenian interests.

There are no comments yet.