

Arsal - Locality Profile

A. Basic Information

Arsal / عرسال is a Lebanese village and municipality situated in the North-East of the Bekaa Governorate. It is bordered on the North, “Fakeha”, “Ras Baalbeck” and “al-Kaa” nearby villages, and from the South, “Nahla” and “Younine”, from the East the Syrian border, and from the west, “Rasm al-Hadath” and “Labweh”.¹ The distance from Arsal to Beirut counts 124 kilometers, with an altitude of 1550 m with a surface of 316.94 km². Arsal counts a population of 13595 residents,² it is considering one of the largest Lebanese towns, it covers approximatively 5% of the Lebanese territory.³

With a semi-desert climate, Arsal’s weather is cold in winter, hot and dry in summer, and the rate of rain is around 150 mm from the north and 350 mm in the south east.⁴

The surrounding area has many historical monuments left by the Arabic tribes who settled in the region after the Romans.⁵ According to the ruins and archaeological evidence these ancient’s monuments date from the ancient times: Phoenician, Greek and Romanian.⁶

The Lebanese Ministry of Tourism brochure suggests that the name Arsal or *Ersal* means "God's Throne" in Aramaic. It documents several rock-cut benches (*mastabas*) in the village, numerous historical monuments in the nearby hills and an ancient fortified structure in the nearby *Wadi al-Toun* of unknown date.

The population of Arsal is predominantly Sunni Muslim. As of August 2014, it is approximated at 35,000 residents, excluding the 42,000 refugees registered with the UNHCR, and the 5,000 awaiting registration.⁷

The main families in Arsal are al-Houjairy, Zeidan, Kassem, Behlouk, Fleity, Wehbeh, al-Hasan, Ezz el-Din, Mlouk, Khalaf, Breidy, Sultanne, al-Chab, Aoudeh, al-Attrache, Karnaby, al-Daji, al-Dousaly, Hammoud,

¹ Jeanne D’arc AbiYaghi, Marie Hosri, Carla Haddad, 2008, “Arsal, God Throne“, *Army Journal*, No 276 (In Arabic) http://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/ar/news/?18473#.VBmKL_mSwxo [last accessed November 20th, 2014].

² Centre de ressource pour le développement local , 2007, <http://localiban.org/spip.php?article3988> [last accessed November 20th, 2014].

³ Ibid.

⁴ Jeanne D’arc AbiYaghi, Marie Hosri, Carla Haddad, 2008, op.cit.

⁵ The Official Website of the Ministry of Tourism, <http://www.tourism-lebanon.com/Brochures/Bekaa/baalbeck.pdf>, [last accessed November 20th, 2014].

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Inter-agency update on the situation in Arsal and surrounding areas, UNHCR, English, 9-10 August 2014, https://www.google.com.lb/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CBsQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fdata.unhcr.org%2Fsyrianrefugees%2Fdownload.php%3Fid%3D6640&ei=9qgaVIXnKlLX7AagviHwCA&usq=AFQjCNHnHZs3MrzSrvGoesUqn1vTIVH-Q&sig2=UYjsbXJ1_mtrH-IXkndzkQ&bvm=bv.75097201,d.ZGU, [last accessed November 20th, 2014].

Abou Fares, Zaarour, Hamid, Oueishy, Sameily, Nouh, Jabawi, Raad, al-Kharouf, al- Rifai, Ghadadah, al-Deddeh, Rayed, Chahine, Asoun, Makssoud and al-Sekrih.⁸

B. Political and Institutional Context

Number of municipal board members: 21 members.⁹

Contact details: 08/ 240 402-3

Municipality's premises: The municipality's building has been owned by it since its establishment in 1964. The board is also planning to acquire a new building. Within the premises, five rooms are currently used, including a large one available for meetings.¹⁰

Current municipal member, positions, political information:

Currently in office

Name	Position
Ali al-Houjairy	Mayor
Ahmad al-Fleity	Vice-mayor
Abdel Hamid al-Hjairy	Accountant

Previous mayors

Name
Mhammad Youssef
Ali Mhammad El Hojairy
Bassel Ahmad El Hjairy
Abdel Rahman Mhammad El Hjairy

The municipality of Arsal has been founded in 1952. The first elections held after the end of the incidents in Lebanon was in 1998. The number of its members at the time is 18,¹¹ but today it is 21 members, all of them are men, spread over 11 committees including (health, education, agriculture, media, environmental,

⁸ Jeanne D'arc AbiYaghi, Marie Hosri, Carla Haddad, 2008, op.cit.

⁹ Interview by the Lebanon Support team with Ahmad al-Fleity, November 6th, 2014, Beirut.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Jeanne D'arc AbiYaghi, Marie Hosri, Carla Haddad, 2008, op.cit.

procurement and tenders ...).¹² In the last municipal elections of 2004, Arsal counted 20883 registered voters of which 11274 actual voters.¹³

State Institutions

Type	Name of person in charge
Police station	The police station is just in the municipality ¹⁴
Security forces institution	A center for security forces ¹⁵
Army barracks and location	Army patrols circulates inside Arsal and they are located only on the border. ¹⁶
Union of municipalities	There is no Union of municipalities at Arsal ¹⁷
Social service center	A local office for the ministry of Foreign Affairs ¹⁸ Rafic Hariri dispensary in Arsal

Arsal contributed at many Lebanese and Arab revolution, 450 martyrs from this village died in the south of Lebanon, in Palestine, and in Iraq. Many of the youth at Arsal were involved in the broad ranks of the Lebanese National Resistance Front, supported by the Lebanese Communist Party

C. Economic Context

¹² Interview by the Lebanon Support team with Ahmad al-Fleity, November 6th, 2014, Beirut.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Interview by the Lebanon Support team with Merhi Fleity, November 11th, 2014, Beirut.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Interview by the Lebanon Support team with Merhi Fleity, November 11th, 2014, Beirut.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Interview by the Lebanon Support team with Ahmad al-Fleity, November 6th, 2014, Beirut.

There are 30 companies with more than 5 employees in Aarsal.¹⁹

Key economic activities

<p>Agriculture (key products, land ownership (farmers, rented/feudal?), etc.)</p>	<p>The production of wheat at Aarsal remains a modest production that can only cover the need of the producer. In order to improve this production, a coalition of three local associations happens targeting to raise the economic edge of the farmer and improve the crops.</p>
<p>Industry (existing industries including small local industries)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In cooperation with the “European Union” and through the “Council for Development and Reconstruction” (CDR), a center for modern packaging and automated supply was created to help delivering and selling a fresh export.²⁰ - Today, Aarsal is famous for its handmade carpets, an industry that employs more than 150 female workers.²¹ - Currently in Aarsal there are about 60 small crushers, 100 Quarries that provide income for hundred families.²²

D. Educational Context

<p>Name of school, vocational training, centre, nurseries</p>	<p>Grades served</p>	<p>Students/ Staff</p>	<p>Notes</p>
<p>“Aarsal formal primary school”²³</p>	<p>Elementary, kindergarten and primary education.</p>	<p>310 students, 36 teachers</p>	<p>Oldest school in the village, built in 1960 and growing year after year to accept a high number of students.</p>
<p>Private schools (11)</p>	<p>Primary and Elementary</p>	<p>3063 students</p>	

¹⁹ Centre de ressource pour le développement local, 2007, op.cit.

²⁰ Jeanne D’arc AbiYaghi, Marie Hosri, Carla Haddad, 2008, op.cit.

²¹ Lebanese ministry of tourism, <http://www.tourism-lebanon.com/Brochures/Bekaa/baalbeck.pdf> [last accessed November 20th, 2014].

²² Jeanne D’arc AbiYaghi, Marie Hosri, Carla Haddad, 2008, op.cit.

²³ Ibid.

<i>Al Makassed Islamic Charitable School</i>			
Public Schools (3)	Primary and Elementary	1341 students	
Technical Schools Technical School of Arsal	BT/TS/LT	368 students, 350 teachers, 114 in technical schools	Arsal's inhabitants truly suffer the absence of more technical schools to learn and practice agriculture and veterinary technique and education. ²⁴

The education sector suffers from many problems, like relatively good buildings, a severe shortage of equipment and laboratories, and educational resources. Moreover no sport activity, recreation and culture projects, also students are very weak in foreign languages. Furthermore, there is no university in the nearby villages, so the graduated students find hard to continue their education.

- Universities that village student go to most: There are no Universities at Arsal, the students go usually to Zahle's Universities.²⁵

E. Health and Health Services

Name/type	Person in charge	Authority in charge/ Collaborative authorities	Notes
Health Centre		Municipality	Municipality's sponsorship is limited to its capacities
Clinics (5)		- Owned by associations and institutions - Collaboration with Ministries of Health and Social Affairs	- Lack of funding and equipment - Role limited to annual campaigns (e.g. vaccination) and some extension activities ²⁶

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Interview by the Lebanon Support team with Ahmad al-Fleity, November 6th, 2014, Beirut.

²⁶ Centre de ressource pour le développement local, 2007, op.cit.

The emergency hospitalization, handled at hospitals at Baalbeck, Ras Baalbeck, Zahle and Beirut, and sometimes hospitals in Syria.²⁷

Amel organisation manage a local medical center at arsal, where doctors and specialists organize visits in order to help children, youth and elderly persons in the village.²⁸

F. Social and Leisure Context

Arsal is also suffering from a large negligence in social services that embrace the economic and social life and that limited the cultural perspective of the town.

Religious institutions: There are more than 6 Big mosques can receive 300 to 400 visitors, and more than 14 small mosques in the village coordinated by Dar El Fatwa.²⁹

Name of the mosques	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Al Chafak- Wadi al Arnab- Wadi l Hosen- Al Zaytouni- Othman Ben Othman- Al Hussein- Abou Obayda	

Leisure spaces

The absence of cultural infrastructure and entertainment has a clear negative impact on the evolution of the situation. Only few cultural activities are made for children in schools.

An estimation in 2008 showed that the number of children in Arsal is by 6000 students who are deprived of any recreational activity or sports fields or public parks.

²⁷ Jeanne D'arc AbiYaghi, Marie Hosri, Carla Haddad, 2008, op.cit.

²⁸ Interview by the Lebanon Support team with Merhi Fleity, November 11th, 2014, Beirut.

²⁹ Interview by the Lebanon Support team with Ahmad al-Fleity, November 6th, 2014, Beirut.

Type	Notes
(Internet cafe, billiards space, sports space, public garden, cafe, etc.)	There are few cafe restaurants at Aرسال but no public libraries said Mr Fleity. ³⁰
Public garden	Established by the municipality to help building a social life in the village. ³¹
Cultural Center	Created by the municipality in collaboration with the UNESCO in order to gather the children and youths.

Community-based organizations & Cooperatives

To provide the local development at Aرسال, many associations have been established in order to help in the development of the town.

Name	Field	Contact details	Notes
Organization of the lighted bridges جمعية جسور النور	Rural development		
جمعية النهضة Al Nahda Association	Rural development		

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Jeanne D'arc AbiYaghi, Marie Hosri, Carla Haddad, 2008, op.cit.

Rural Development Association جمعية التنمية الريفية	Rural development	President, Mr. Joseph Breidy and Mr. Ahmad Al Fleity	Civil volunteers envisage an independent public benefit through this NGO who has been founded in 1990 in order to improve the quality of life of the people at Aarsal regarding the social, economic and cultural rights. Moreover many projects contribute in maintaining the production of wool and carpet manual industry in town, where girls from the villages have been trained by the association to improve their manual work in carpets. ³²
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Past and existing UN work in the village and region

Name of UN institution	Field/projects	Contact person
UNESCO	Collaboration on creation of cultural center	

G. Infrastructure

Water	40% of homes in Aarsal don't receive the water channels so they have to buy cistern. ³³
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³² Ibid.

³³ Interview by the Lebanon Support team with Merhi Fleity, November 11th, 2014, Beirut.

Electricity	The electricity stations located in Arsal are under big tension due to the 71 refugees camps which count 205 tents each. ³⁴
Sewage	<p>Arsal is facing is the sewage problem, and that require a fast treatment due to the devastating effect on groundwater and drinking water and public health. It is expected that the situation is steadily getting worse, especially when the population growth (700 births per year), and urbanization is horizontal, which means an increase in the pits health. The municipality of Arsal, encounters low expertise and budget, find hard to resolve this costly problem.³⁵</p> <p>In 2014, the sewage problem has been studied as a private project and the municipality is still waiting for funding and aids.³⁶</p>
Garbage collection	The municipality manages to collect the garbage from the village and they burn it in a place far away which causes toxic gas and air pollution. ³⁷
Transportation/road network	The village counts 6000 houses and now with the Syrian crisis it's around 20 000 the refugees came with their cars, vans and trucks. ³⁸

H. Relationship with Surrounding Villages

I. Humanitarian Situation Latest update through inter-agency information: August 9th, 2014

Resident population	35,000
Displaced households (total)	325
Displaced Lebanese households	176
Displaced refugee households	149
Registered refugees	42,000

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Interview by the Lebanon Support team with Ahmad al-Fleity, November 6th, 2014, Beirut.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Interview by the Lebanon Support team with Merhi Fleity, November 11th, 2014, Beirut.

³⁸ Ibid.

Awaiting registration	5,000
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Protection: 325 households (176 Lebanese and 149 Syrian households) remain displaced throughout the Bekaa, as most of the Lebanese Arsali has now returned home. Partners continue to assess their needs and provide assistance. On the night of 9th of August, a convoy carrying 1,086 persons returned to Syria, reportedly without experiencing any difficulties entering Syria. The convoy comprised of those who had stayed in Majdel Anjar, including persons without documentation and whose status had not been regularized. UNHCR was not involved in the movement and is neither promoting nor facilitating any returns to Syria, since the conditions in the country are deemed not conducive for return. The situation of the Syrians stranded in Tniyi, outside Ras Baalbek, is increasingly a concern. Many are reportedly afraid of returning to Aarsal and are not allowed to enter Ras Baalbek, and humanitarian partners have no access to them.

Shelter: An initial assessment suggested that nearly 1,700 tents in 21 informal sites had completely or partially burned, affecting over 3,000 households. The High Relief Commission has indicated that approximately 100-200 houses of Aarsalis were impacted during the fighting.

Health and sanitation: Beyond's mobile medical units serviced informal settlements over the weekend and reported that the majority of cases involved old injuries or children having diarrhea. All boreholes are operational and providing water. In addition, 274,000 liters of water was distributed before the weekend. Initial reports confirmed that 55 water tanks have been destroyed. Local NGOs began a cleaning campaign, collecting garbage and cleaning the roads.

Food and non-food items: All shops and two bakeries in Aarsal are again functioning normally. Prices have allegedly not increased. Food supplies, including vegetables and fruits, from other parts of Bekaa were trucked to these shops. No NFI distribution was undertaken in Aarsal during the weekend, reportedly due to the municipality not allowing the establishment of distribution points.³⁹

[Last updated on November 30, 2014]

³⁹ Inter-agency update on the situation in Aarsal and surrounding areas UNHCR, 9-10 August 2014, https://www.google.com.lb/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CBsQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fdata.unhcr.org%2Fsyrianrefugees%2Fdownload.php%3Fid%3D6640&ei=9qgaVIXnKILX7AagvIHwCA&usg=AFQjCNHnHZs3MrazSrvGoesUgn1vTIVH-Q&sig2=UYjsbXJ1_mtrH-IXkndzkQ&bvm=bv.75097201.d.ZGU, [last accessed November 20th, 2014].