

Aytaroun

Locality Profile

A. Basic Information

Geographic location

Aytaroun, عيترون, is a Lebanese village located in the Caza of Bint-Jbeil, at an altitude of 650 m and a distance of 125 km from Beirut, and 4 km from the Caza's capital, Bint Jbeil. The origin of the name of the village is Itruma, which means the beautiful smell. The village, extending on an area of 1,300 hectares, is bordered by Palestine and Maroun el-Ras from the South, Palestine from the East, Blida and Ainata from the North, and Bint Jbeil from the West.¹

History – Israel-Lebanon war

It is estimated that at least 20 people from two families, including eight Canadians (Akhrass family), were killed when their Aytaroun homes were destroyed in Israeli airstrikes during the 2006 Israel-Lebanon conflict. The village lost 41 villagers to the war new figures said.²

During the 22-year Israeli occupation (1978 - 2000), the village received a significant cash flow from enlistment in the South Lebanon Army (SLA) and work in Israel.³ It is estimated that about \$200,000 would enter the village on a monthly basis due to the aforementioned activities.⁴

Resident population

Considered one of the largest villages in the region, the total population of Aytaroun is estimated at 20,000 inhabitants. The actual number of residents is estimated at 5,000, with around 200 returnees following the end of the recent political conflict. The remainder of the village's population is distributed between emigrants (2,000 in Australia, 1,000 in Germany, 300 in Sweden, and some others in different countries), in addition to around 4,000 internally displaced people (IDP) living in Beirut and a considerable number living in Tyr and other villages.⁵

¹ International Labour Organization International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), *Investigating the Worst Forms of Child Labour No. 17 – Lebanon: Child Labour on Tobacco Plantations: A Rapid Assessment*, May 2002, Geneva, available at: <https://www.google.com.lb/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CCAQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ilo.org%2Fipeinfo%2Fproduct%2Fdownload.do%3Ftype%3Ddocument%26id%3D2602&ei=8X6SVaPdIiKy7QaUzJD4DQ&usg=AFQjCNGU1-g2J6YyzflQKwdIYefUYbKfkQ&sig2=fHXZ2hZgRJRva6aj4dTmEA&bvm=bv.96783405,d.ZGU> [last accessed on June 30th, 2015].

² Project Gutenberg website, available at: <http://self.gutenberg.org/articles/aitaroun> [last accessed on June 30th, 2015].

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ International Labour Organization International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), *op. cit.* 1

⁵ *Ibid.*

Additionally, a considerable percentage of the male youths migrated amidst the political conflict and have not yet returned to the village.⁶

Aytaroun has the following age distribution: 15% above 60 years-old, 40% between 31-59 years-old, 20% between 21-30 years-old, and 25% below 20 years-old. The average family is composed of 6-7 members.

The village is composed of almost 60 families, out of which 18 are considered major families. Al Hassoun has historically been the oldest family in the village, but the largest families are Failat Murad, Abbas Haider, Abdullah and Mustafa.⁷ Other families include Beydoun, Sayed Hassan, Al-Ahmad, repentance, Hamad, Dhawi, Abbas, Murad, Haider, Sheikh Hussein, Faqih, Mehdi, Awada, Abdullah, Qasim, Moisi, Salman, Qossan.

B. Political and Institutional Context

Aytaroun founded its first Municipal Council in 1965 – constituted of nine members and headed by Abbas Ali Khrizzat – which remained until 1975. The municipality remained without a Council between 1975 and 2001, a period marked successively by the civil war and the Israeli occupation, which ended in 2000. In 2001, the second elections of the Municipal Council were held in the district office, which became the main municipality building. With the election of Dr Mahmoud Hassan Farhat, the Council’s constituency was raised to eighteen members. The current board, headed by Salim Mahmoud Murad, was elected in 2010.⁸

Number of municipal board members: 18 members.

Contact details: 07/450955

Municipality’s premises: The municipality's building has been owned by the municipality since its establishment in 1961.

Current municipal member, positions, political information:⁹

Currently in office

Previous mayors

Name	Position
Haidar Mawassi	Mayor
Nagib Kawsan	Vice-mayor
No treasurer	Treasurer

Name
Mahmoud Hassan Farhat
Salim Mourad

⁶ Aytaroun official website, available at: www.aytharoun.com [last accessed on June 30th, 2015].

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid*; Interview by the Lebanon Support team with Dr. Ahmad Mourad, key informant from Aytaroun, June 4th, 2015.

⁹ Interview by the Lebanon Support team with Dr. Ahmad Mourad, key informant from Aytaroun, June 4th, 2015.

State Institutions

Types	Location
Police station	N/A
Security forces institution	The nearest Internal Security Forces (ISF) is in Bint Jbeil.
Army barracks and location	There is an army barrack inside the village for border patrolling.
Union of municipalities	Bint Jbeil
Social service center	A local office for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is present in the municipality town hall.

C. Economic Context

Key economic activities

The primary source of income of most families of Aytaroun is agriculture,¹⁰ around 95% of which is tobacco cultivation, making up for approximately 50% of every family's revenues (around 853 families depend on tobacco cultivation).¹¹ Tobacco cultivation is characterized by fragmented small land plots, with a maximum allowable "quota" equivalent to four dunums per farmer. The total area of land cultivated with tobacco amounts to 3,305 dunums, with a production of 350,000 kg for a total of LBP 4,000 million. The majority of tobacco farmers own 4-5 dunums, with the following distribution:

Cultivated area (dunums)	Number of farmers	Percentage of farmers (%)
1-2	39	4
2-3	23	4
3-4	40	5
4-10	703	82
>10	48	5

The remaining 5% of the agricultural production of the village consists of fruit trees, vegetables, and grain crops; these include *inter alia* olives, wheat, barley, lentils, hons, maguey, melon, watermelon, grapes and cactus.¹² Traditional tools are still employed for cultivation, in addition to machinery for plough purposes only.

¹⁰ Project Gutenberg website, available at: <http://self.gutenberg.org/articles/aitaroun> [last accessed on June 30th, 2015].

¹¹ Interview by the Lebanon Support team with Dr. Ahmad Mourad, key informant from Aytaroun, June 4th, 2015.

¹² Aytaroun official website, available at: www.aytharoun.com [last accessed on June 30th, 2015].

The primacy of agriculture in the village’s economy is exemplified by the space division of the town, with agricultural areas representing more than 7,500 acres out of a total of 13,000 acres, and the occupation of its inhabitants, 60% of which are farmers including 70 cattlemen. Furthermore, it should be noted Aytaroun, alongside the neighbouring villages of Deir Kifa and Rmeish, are all characterized by a high percentage of internal displacement, with youths often migrating to urban areas. Nonetheless, the three villages combined make up for 70% of the tobacco production in the whole of Lebanon.¹³

However, it should be noted that agriculture (including cattle-breeding) which has traditionally constituted the main source of income for southern Lebanese populations, is today confronted with serious constraints including the need for irrigation and agricultural infrastructures, alongside the limited capacities of agricultural cooperatives, the absence of extension services and the high production costs. More specifically, the marginalization of the agricultural sector in rural areas in general, and in villages on the Lebanese border specifically, have led to the deterioration of the living conditions in Aytaroun, further aggravated as a result of the 22-year Israeli occupation and its high level of unemployment.¹⁴

Aytaroun also has a number of small industries employing less than three workers – who are usually members of the same family - in addition to around 50 small stores.

Revenues and poverty

Lebanon is characterized by a huge disparity in the distribution of revenues, with a heavy concentration of low-incomes in South Lebanon and particularly in the cazas of Bint Jbeil and Marjayoun; those areas have not only been long neglected by the central State, they have also suffered from occupation and internal conflicts for over two decades. The main issues which increase the vulnerability of Aytaroun include the lack of quality public services, problems affecting the agricultural sector, the environmental degradation, the social exclusion of youths, and the poor living conditions of the majority of the population.¹⁵

D. Educational Context

There are five schools operating in Aytaroun: two public ones and three private ones. Public schools, elementary and intermediate, encompass 250 students, with a higher percentage of girls especially for the intermediate level. The total number of students in the private schools amount to 570, and they are distributed among one elementary school and two intermediate schools. Aytaroun counts 115 active instructors, of whom 47 teach in the village whereas others teach in surrounding villages.

Name of school, vocational training,	Grades served	Students/
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¹³ Interview by the Lebanon Support team with Dr. Ahmad Mourad, key informant from Aytaroun, June 4th, 2015.

¹⁴ UNDP, *United Nations Development Programme Country: LEBANON: Project Document*, March 2013, available at: <http://www.lb.undp.org/content/dam/lebanon/docs/Poverty/Projects/Project%20Document.pdf> [last accessed on June 30th, 2015].

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

centre, nurseries		Staff
Private schools (3) Khalil Mahfouz Ibrhim Tawbe (Jafari school)	One Elementary Two Intermediate	570 students
Public Schools (2)	Primary and Elementary and Intermediate	250 students
Technical Schools (none)	BT/TS/LT	0

The education sector suffers from many problems, notably a severe shortage in students due to immigration and internal displacement of populations. Furthermore, several schools (both public and private) have recently closed their doors due to the lack of registration and educational resources.¹⁶

Youths under 25-year-old have long been neglected mostly as a result of the occupation. The absence of social activities, the deteriorated educational system, unemployment and lack of job opportunities constitute the major causes for the immigration and internal displacement of youths. Furthermore, the limited capacities of the Municipal Council, due to financial and resources shortages, are challenges affecting the development process at the local level.

E. Health and Health Services

The village has one health center that is operated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and three private clinics owned and operated by associations and individuals.¹⁷

Name/type	Authority in charge/ Collaborative authorities	Notes
Health Centre	Municipality	Municipality's sponsorship is limited to its capacities
Clinics (3)	- Owned by associations and individuals - 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

Accessible Hospitals¹⁸

¹⁶ Interview by the Lebanon Support team with Dr. Ahmad Mourad, key informant from Aytaroun, June 4th, 2015.

¹⁷ Baldati website, available at: <http://www.baldati.com/networks/community.php?networkid=1499> [last accessed on June 30th, 2015].

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Caza	Hospital	Town	Contact details
Nabatiyeh	Janoub - Nabatieh	Nabatiyeh	07-764529 07-760151
Bint Jbeil	Inaya Hospital	Ain Ebel	07-470047
Bint Jbeil	Bint-Jbeil Governmental Hospital	Bint Jbeil	07-452000 07452003
Bint Jbeil	Islamic Health Institution	Saf El Hawa	07-450100/3/4
Tyre	Lebanese Italian Hospital	Tyre – Al Housh	07-344423
Tyre	Hiram Hospital	Tyre, Jal el Baher	07-343700 07-343710 07-343715
Nabatiyeh	Najdeh Chaabiyeh Hospital	Kfar Roummane, Habboush Highway	07-530970 07-530971 07-530972

F. Social services and development

Community-based organizations & Cooperatives

Name of active organizations	Field/projects
UCODEP ¹⁹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced and diffused new farming techniques and improving the Lebanese genetic resources of productive bees and cows • Built a database software to store and analyze information regarding cow keeping in the region, and established an Artificial Insemination office in Aytaroun • Emergency Intervention - Rehabilitation of polyfunctional structures in Aytaroun as instrument of UCODEP economic recovery and reinforcement of the local community
ESFD ²⁰	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce severe poverty in the community of Aytaroun through sustainable projects • Improve the living conditions in Aytaroun, especially for the poor and vulnerable groups • Reduce the level of unemployment • Sustain the physical environment

¹⁹ Embassy of Italy – Beirut, *The Italian Cooperation in Lebanon: ROSS Emergency Program 2007-2008*, available at: <http://www.localiban.org/IMG/pdf/Ross-Emergency-Program.pdf> [last accessed on June 30th, 2015].

²⁰ European Union, Council for Development and Reconstruction: Economic and Social Fund for Development Project, *Local Development Plan of the Community of Aytaroun*, June 2004, available at: <http://www.esfd.cdr.gov.lb/uploads/Local%20Development%20Plan%20Aytaroun%20V5.0.pdf> [last accessed on June 30th, 2015].

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving conditions for human health • Improving education, community integration and participation
Amani South Association ²¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Behavior Education program • Promote Road Safety and prevent road injuries • Protect the environment • Empower Women • Eradicate Illiteracy • Promote Skills and Arts Communications Technology program • Engaging Youth in Development Program
GVC ²²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to the social and economic promotion of women in different regions affected by the war (Beqaa, South Lebanon)
Lebanon Knowledge Development Gateway ²³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase accessibility to education by opening schools • Fight against poverty, ignorance • Dissemination of intellectual and national, cultural and scientific awareness through lectures, seminars, plays • Social and educational activities

G. Infrastructure²⁴

Water	<p>Currently, most homes in Aytaroun do not receive running water through the water channels which forces them to rely heavily on rain water in the winter and the water pipeline from neighbouring Bint Jbeil in the summer. However, most still need to purchase water from local providers for agricultural and domestic purposes. Many municipalities in Bint Jbeil, including Aytaroun, tried to solve the water problem by digging wells which had to be dug up to 250 m.</p> <p>During the occupation, the village relied on Israel for potable water at a cost of LPB 2,500 per cubic meter per day.</p>
Electricity	The electricity network within the village was established in

²¹ Amani South Association website, available at: <http://amanisouth.webs.com/about-us> [last accessed on June 30th, 2015].

²² Embassy of Italy – Beirut, *The Italian Cooperation in Lebanon: ROSS Emergency Program 2007-2008*, available at: <http://www.localiban.org/IMG/pdf/Ross-Emergency-Program.pdf> [last accessed on June 30th, 2015].

²³ Lebanon Knowledge Development website, available at: <http://lkdg.org/node/1229> [last accessed on June 30th, 2015].

²⁴ International Labour Organization International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), *op. cit.* 1

	1964.
Garbage collection	<p>Waste is collected by a tractor owner who dumps it outside of the village for a monthly membership fee of LBP 50,000 per household. It is thereafter collected by the Bint Jbeil municipality.</p> <p>Organic waste pollution remains a major problem in the southern Lebanon region due to the threat it poses to the environment and the health of the resident population. The majority of the garbage is ultimately dumped, or uncontrollably burnt in open land.²⁵</p>
Transportation/road network	Relatively small, the road network within Aytaroun needs rehabilitation.

H. Concluding remarks

Following the above overview of the village and its characteristics, it is worth noting that the high level of unemployment, the weak infrastructure, the unsafe hygienic conditions, the limited perspectives for using human capacities, and the marginalization of vulnerable groups are deepening the vulnerability of Aytaroun. The village is in need for an accelerated development that would deal with all the social and infrastructural aspects of the village.²⁶

²⁵ UNDP, *United Nations Development Programme Country: LEBANON: Project Document*, March 2013, available at: <http://www.lb.undp.org/content/dam/lebanon/docs/Poverty/Projects/Project%20Document.pdf> [last accessed on June 30th, 2015].

²⁶ *Ibid.*