

HOULA VILLAGE PROFILE

1. LOCATION AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Houla is a village located in the district of Marjeyoun a city in the Southern Governorate of Lebanon (one of the eight governorates). It is around 110 kilometres away from Beirut, and around 22 kilometres from the centre of the Caza'. Houla is characterized by a moderate climate. Its elevation is around 750 meters above sea level with an average annual rainfall of 600- 700 mm.

Houla falls on four hills and is bordered by Markaba to the north, Shakra to the west, Palestine to the east, and Mays El Jabal to the South.

The village is distinguished by its red soil suitable for the cultivation of olives and figs.

2. POPULATION

The total number of the population is around 9900. The village inhabitants witnessed internal displacement, by which around 6000 villagers were displaced to other parts of the country - such as Tyre, Nabatieh, Ikleem Al Kharoub and the Southern Suburbs of Beirut-. Additionally, a number of the village inhabitants around 1500 migrated to countries such as Germany and Kuwait (See Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of Population

| Population | Number | In Percent |
|------------|--------|------------|
| Residents | 2400 | 24.2 |
| Displaced | 6000 | 60.6 |
| Migrants | 1500 | 15.2 |
| Total | 9900 | 100.0 |

There are 2400 inhabitants during winter, while the number rises to around 5000 people during the summer. The number of registered voters is around 5450 voters, as estimated by the 2010 summer elections.

2.1 Age Groups

Around 45 % of the residents are less than 21 years old.

2.2 Labour Force

Labour force participation in Houla is estimated at 40 % of the total resident population of the village.

The distribution of the labour force by economic activity in Houla is as follows:

- Agriculture (10%) such as olives and tobacco.

- Educational sector (20%)
- Liberal professions, crafts (45%)
- Workers (25%)

Many of the youth people in the village who have joined the working force are engaged in professions and crafts located both in Houla and in close neighbourhoods. The working women participate in agricultural work of the village, in addition to a few who occupy positions in the educational and nursing sectors in Houla or nearby villages.

Unemployment in Houla is around 15 %.

3. ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

3.1 AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Houla lies on a total area of about 14720 dunums of which 24 per cent are considered cultivated land. (See table 2).

Table 2: Land use

| Land use | Area (in dunums) |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| Total area | 14720 |
| Arable land (not cultivated) | 5000 |
| Cultivated area | 3500 |

Table 3 shows the different types of rain-fed and irrigated open-cultivated vegetables in Houla. The most common cultivated products within this area are olives, tobacco, grains, figs and thyme.

Table 3: Agricultural Products

| Products | In Percent of cultivated areas |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Olives | 60 |
| Tobacco | 20 |
| Grains (wheat, barley, lentils, homos) | 10 |
| Figs | 10 |

Houla also produces a range of agro-industrial products that are consumed locally and the remaining is marketed in Beirut. The different types of agro- productions are as follows:

- Olive Oil
- Burghul
- Thyme
- Soap
- Dairy products

The village also has some agricultural enterprises and cooperatives such as:

- Two olive presses.
- General agricultural cooperative for the residents of Houla.
- Cooperative for Agricultural Guidance.

There are some problems facing the agricultural sector in Houla such as:

- The lack of water for irrigation
- The high costs of productions of wheat and olives.
- Lack of medicines.
- Lack of information on diseases.

3.2 LIVESTOCK

The residents in Houla rear domestic animals such as cows, bees, sheep, goats, and horses for farming (See Table 4).

Table 4: Livestock in Houla

| Cows | Beehives | Goats | Sheep | Horses |
|---|-----------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| 250 heads, 150 of which are for milking. | 450 | 1500 | 500 | 30 |

3.3 CRAFTS AND TRADE SECTORS

There are several craft and trade activities in Houla, mainly in painting, aluminium, carpeting, and concrete carpeting (see Table 5).

Table 5: Crafts and Trades

| Profession | Number of Workers or institutions |
|------------------------------|--|
| Concrete carpenters | 20 people |
| Carpenters | 3 people |
| Industrial blacksmith | 2 people |
| Car blacksmith | 1 person |
| Painters | 10 people |
| Construction | 10 people |
| Sanitary | 7 people |
| Tiling | 10 people |
| Electricity | 5 people |
| Bakers | 4 people |
| Butchers | 2 people |
| Aluminium | 1 persons |
| Car mechanics | 2 people |
| Car electricity | 1 person |
| Oil change | 2 persons |
| Cellular shops | 1 shop |

| | |
|------------------------------------|---------------|
| Tool shops | 1 shop |
| Restaurants | 2 restaurants |
| Internet and computer shops | 2 shops |
| Groceries | 11 groceries |
| Vegetable shops | 3 shops |
| Clothes shops | 3 shops |
| Shoe shops | 1 shop |
| Concrete factories | 2 factories |

The economic status of the population has severely declined, as many citizens have lost their jobs and have become unemployed. Further, this has been reflected on the crafts and trade sector and it has been amplified with the lack of security and instability in the area.

4. EDUCATION

100 % of school children had primary education. Students in Houla are enrolled in the private and public schools of the village and in schools in Tibneen and Marjeyoun.

5. HEALTH STATUS

Houla health facilities are limited, as there is no governmental or private health centre. However, there is one health clinic in the village which belongs to Najda Al Shaabiya and which provides the following services such as general medicine and dentistry.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

Houla relies on two artesian wells that are part of the Al Taybi Project (Al-Litani and Al-Wazani). ; There is absence of a public sewage network, while solid wastes are usually collected in one placed and then burned.

7. RELATIONSHIPS WITH NEARBY VILLAGES

Houla has a public market that takes place every Saturday.

8. INSTITUTIONS AND SERVICES

Houla is governed by a municipal council which was founded in 1964, and is currently administrated by 15 members elected by the locals of the area. The council is assisted by several committees composed of locals from the village. There are also 4 contracted and 1 permanent employees working in the municipality. The municipal council headquarters has been temporarily lent to the municipality.

It is the responsibility of the municipal council to provide a number of services to the residents of Houla, which includes the:

1. Collection of wastes.
2. Maintenance of public lighting.

3. Establishment of pavements, supports walls and opening of agricultural land.

Additionally, Houla has a number of local institutions dealing with social matters in the village, they are:

- Al Sada Association.
- Houla's Charity Organization.
- Environment and Tree organization.
- Development Association of Houla.
- Cultural Centre for the People of Houla.
- Women and Child Welfare Association.