

Policy Report

From Fragmentation to Integration

A Roadmap for Jbeil's Territorial Resilience

June 1, 2026

Developed by the Michel Issa Foundation (MIF)

In collaboration with the LAU Adnan Kassar School of Business (AKSOB)

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Core Message

Jbeil's central challenge is fragmentation, not a lack of assets. A resilient territorial model requires integrating infrastructure, environment, tourism, entrepreneurship, and community wellbeing through coordinated district-level action.

Policy Actions at a Glance

1. Strengthen district-level coordination and integrated municipal services.
2. Protect water resources, forests, agriculture, and environmental assets.
3. Build inclusive tourism clusters linking Byblos, villages, coast, and mountains.
4. Activate entrepreneurship, innovation, and digital municipal services.
5. Create inclusive community platforms for employment, health, skills, and participation.

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Foreword

Michel Issa Foundation

Jbeil district is not merely a geographic area; it is a living tapestry that weaves together the richness of history, the beauty of nature, and human creativity. For thousands of years, this land has stood as a beacon of continuity, where the vitality of the coast meets the strength of its mountainous heritage.

Today, we stand at a pivotal turning point. Despite Jbeil's wealth of assets —ranging from leading academic institutions and rich agricultural diversity to a growing entrepreneurial spirit— we face a clear paradox: the more we operate in isolation, the less capable we are of achieving meaningful progress.

This reality is reflected in the fragmentation of municipal and local service delivery, the disconnect between economic and social development pathways, and the existing gap between local communities and the essential services needed by towns and villages across the district.

At Michel Issa Foundation, where local development lies at the core of our mission, we believe that the strength of the Jbeil district stems not from individual efforts, but from their integration. In this context, we are proud to present this policy report, developed in collaboration with the Adnan Kassar School of Business at the Lebanese American University, following an in-depth assessment of the current situation and a series of inclusive consultations with key stakeholders to identify diverse needs.

This roadmap, titled "From Fragmentation to Integration: Towards Resilient and Sustainable Development in the Jbeil District," is not merely an academic exercise. It represents a practical strategic framework aimed at translating our shared vision into tangible action.

Our objective is clear: to move from scattered initiatives to a unified framework. By coordinating infrastructure, protecting environmental capital, promoting sustainable tourism, and supporting local innovation, we can build a district that not only withstands present challenges but thrives in the face of future opportunities.

This document is an open call to all stakeholders —municipalities, the private sector, civil society, academic institutions, and the people of Jbeil— to work together. Let us use this framework to align efforts, bridge gaps, and guide planning toward a comprehensive and sustainable development model.

The future of Jbeil is not a matter of chance; it is the result of a decision. By choosing integration, we choose a stronger and more sustainable future for generations to come.

With sincere appreciation.

Dr. Tony Michel Issa

President of the Michel Issa Foundation for Local Development

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Lebanese American University

Universities have a responsibility to contribute to the public good through teaching, research, and service. In Lebanon's present context, that responsibility also includes engaging more directly with the challenges facing communities and helping generate practical, evidence-based responses to them. This policy brief is an integral part of that institutional commitment. Jbeil district offers a compelling setting for this kind of work. It brings together a rich historical legacy, important environmental and cultural assets, active municipalities, entrepreneurial potential, and strong local communities. At the same time, like many districts in Lebanon, it faces pressures that require more coordinated, collaborative and forward-looking responses across infrastructure, local economies, environmental management, and social wellbeing.

This report, prepared through collaboration between the Adnan Kassar School of Business at the Lebanese American University and the Michel Issa Foundation, speaks to the value of linking academic work with local development practice. Its contribution lies in bringing together analysis, stakeholder engagement, and applied policy thinking in order to support a more integrated vision for the district. This is especially important at a time when fragmented approaches are proving increasingly insufficient to address complex and interdependent challenges.

At Lebanese American University, we believe that knowledge should not remain confined within institutions. It should inform decisions, strengthen partnerships, and help communities identify realistic pathways for progress. This is particularly true when development questions require interdisciplinary thinking and sustained collaboration across public, private, and civil actors.

The issues addressed in this report are not isolated sectoral concerns. Infrastructure, environmental sustainability, tourism, entrepreneurship, and community wellbeing shape one another in complex direct and indirect ways. Approaching them within a shared territorial framework and a holistic analytical lens can improve planning, strengthen implementation, and support more resilient outcomes over time.

I hope this work serves as a useful reference for policymakers, municipalities, development actors, and community leaders in Byblos and beyond. It represents the kind of engaged, locally grounded, and future-oriented work that universities should actively support. I also hope it encourages further collaboration between academic institutions and local partners committed to inclusive and sustainable development in Lebanon.

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Executive Summary

Jbeil District possesses exceptional territorial assets. Its historical depth, environmental diversity, cultural heritage, agricultural landscapes, tourism potential, academic institutions, and active local communities provide strong foundations for long-term development. Yet these strengths remain underused because district development continues to be shaped by fragmentation. Services, investments, and local initiatives are often pursued in isolation, without a shared territorial framework linking infrastructure, environment, economy, and social wellbeing.

This policy report proposes an integrated territorial approach for Jbeil. It argues that resilience depends on treating infrastructure, natural resources, tourism, entrepreneurship, and community wellbeing as interconnected systems. Reliable energy, water, wastewater, waste management, transport, and digital services are necessary conditions for productive local economies, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion. At the same time, agriculture, forests, tourism, innovation, and community wellbeing reinforce one another and require coordinated planning across municipalities and sectors.

The assessment identifies important assets already present in the district. These include the Jbeil Electricity Company, wastewater infrastructure, the Janneh Dam project, the Hbaline landfill, improved road connectivity, major nature reserves, diverse farming systems, rich cultural and religious heritage, universities, SMEs, and civil society organizations. However, their developmental impact remains constrained by weak coordination, incomplete implementation, uneven access, limited digitalization, and insufficient institutional continuity.

Across the five areas examined, the report identifies a common pattern. In infrastructure and municipal services, Jbeil faces persistent gaps in energy reliability, water and wastewater systems, solid waste management, transport safety, and digital service delivery. In agriculture and the environment, small-scale producers, forests, water resources, and rural livelihoods are under pressure from pollution, weak governance, overuse, and unplanned urban expansion. In tourism, visitor activity remains concentrated in Byblos and a few destinations, while many villages remain weakly integrated into tourism circuits. In entrepreneurship, local initiative and talent are constrained by regulatory burdens, weak access to finance, and limited public-private-academic coordination. In community wellbeing, vulnerable groups continue to face barriers related to information, mobility, stigma, and fragmented access to health, education, and employment support.

The report recommends a shift toward district-level coordination and practical, decentralized solutions. Priority actions include strengthening inter-municipal planning, expanding renewable energy and municipal digitalization, improving water and wastewater security,

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modernizing waste systems through circular approaches, protecting agricultural and forest landscapes, linking farmers to value chains, building thematic tourism clusters, supporting creative and rural enterprises, simplifying business procedures, improving access to entrepreneurial finance, and creating inclusive community platforms that connect employment, health awareness, and social participation.

Jbeil's central challenge is therefore one of integration. The district does not lack assets, institutions, or local readiness. It requires a coherent territorial model that aligns governance, investment, environmental stewardship, livelihoods, and inclusion. By moving from isolated initiatives to coordinated action, Jbeil can become a national model for resilient, inclusive, and place-based development in Lebanon.

Key Takeaways

Fragmentation is the central challenge: Across infrastructure, environment, tourism, entrepreneurship, and community wellbeing, Jbeil has significant assets and local readiness to act. Progress remains constrained by weak coordination, uneven implementation, and the absence of a shared territorial framework.

Jbeil has a strong foundation to build on: The district benefits from exceptional historical and cultural depth, environmental diversity, agricultural resources, tourism potential, academic institutions, active municipalities, civil society organizations, and entrepreneurial energy. The main issue lies in limited integration rather than a lack of assets or local capacity.

Infrastructure underpins territorial resilience: Reliable energy, water security, wastewater systems, solid waste management, safe transport, and digital municipal services are essential for daily life, economic activity, environmental protection, and social inclusion across the district.

Landscapes and livelihoods are interconnected: Agriculture, forests, water systems, coastal and mountain ecosystems, and local livelihoods form a single territorial system. Protecting these assets requires stronger coordination across land use, water governance, and forest management, as well as support for climate-resilient agriculture and local value chains.

Tourism should be more territorially inclusive: Tourism activity remains concentrated in Byblos and a limited number of destinations, while many villages with valuable cultural, ecological, and spiritual assets remain marginal to tourism circuits. A more integrated district-wide tourism model can distribute benefits more equitably and strengthen local livelihoods.

Entrepreneurship needs an enabling ecosystem: Administrative bottlenecks, weak access to finance, limited digitization, and insufficient public-private-academic coordination continue to

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constrain enterprise development. Supporting innovation in tourism, green sectors, creative industries, and local services can expand economic opportunity, especially for youth.

Community wellbeing is a development priority: Access to employment, health awareness, education, mobility, and inclusive participation remains uneven, particularly for vulnerable groups. Stronger community platforms and better coordination among local actors are needed to connect people with services, opportunities, and support.

Coordination is essential for implementation: Jbeil's long-term resilience depends on moving from isolated municipal and sectoral initiatives toward shared planning, practical decentralization, and action-oriented partnerships that align infrastructure, environment, economy, and social well-being.

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INTRODUCTION

Jbeil District stands at a critical crossroads. As one of Lebanon’s most historically continuous territories—where coastal cities, rural villages, forests, agricultural lands, and mountains intersect—Jbeil offers multiple opportunities and faces deep vulnerability. Over millennia, the Jbeil district evolved into an integrated living system in which natural resources, settlements, heritage, and local economies are intertwined. Today, that coherence is strained by prolonged economic, institutional, and environmental crises. Across infrastructure, agriculture, tourism, innovation, and community wellbeing, a pattern appears: assets and capacity exist, and stakeholders are willing to collaborate, yet outcomes are limited by fragmentation, weak coordination, and the absence of a shared territorial framework. Municipal services operate in silos; investments lack integration with environmental and economic goals; landscapes are separated from value chains and livelihoods; tourism is spatially concentrated; innovation struggles to scale; and social services inadequately reach vulnerable populations.

This paper advances a place-based, integrated territorial approach for Jbeil. Treating infrastructure, environment, tourism, entrepreneurship, and wellbeing as interdependent systems enables collective planning. It identifies assets, diagnoses constraints, and proposes pragmatic actions to transform fragmented initiatives into a coordinated territory that protects natural capital and strengthens inclusive development.

I. Toward connected territories & integrated municipal services

Collaborators: Dr. Hamza Jaffal³, Fadi Saliba⁴

BACKGROUND

Jbeil District constitutes a territorially diverse and functionally interdependent system, stretching from the Mediterranean coast to high-altitude mountain areas. Its socio-economic vitality, environmental sustainability, and long-term resilience depend on the quality, reliability, and integration of basic infrastructure and municipal services. Energy supply, water and wastewater systems, solid waste management, transport networks, and digital connectivity collectively shape daily life, determine economic competitiveness, and influence the feasibility of sustainable tourism, agriculture, and local enterprise development. Despite progress in some sectors, persistent structural gaps remain, amplified by Lebanon’s economic and institutional crisis, weakened central capacity, disrupted long-term planning, and constrained municipal resources.

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Jbeil benefits from strategic assets that could underpin an integrated territorial approach: a functioning Jbeil Electricity Company, an operational wastewater treatment plant with an extended sewer network, the Janneh Dam project, and the landfill at Hbaline. Yet these assets are not coordinated within a coherent district-wide vision linking infrastructure to environmental protection, economic productivity, and spatial equity across coastal, urban, rural, and mountain communities. Strengthening territorial connectivity and service integration—reliable energy, water security, effective wastewater and solid waste systems, accessible transport, and municipal services—is a prerequisite for inclusive development. Without this, local development and conservation efforts will remain structurally constrained.

TERRITORIAL INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICE ASSETS

Jbeil District’s infrastructure base reflects decades of incremental public investment, donor-supported projects, and municipal-level initiatives. Although the quality and coverage of these assets remain uneven, they nevertheless constitute an important foundation for building a more integrated, efficient, and resilient territorial service system.

One of the district’s notable institutional assets is the Jbeil Electricity Company, which offers a degree of local operational autonomy compared to other regions of Lebanon, which rely exclusively on centralized electricity provision. In addition, the Janneh Dam project—if fully completed—has been designed not only to address long-term water supply needs but also to generate hydropower, potentially contributing to greater energy security and diversifying the district’s local energy sources. Water and wastewater infrastructure also represent an important component of the district’s service base. Jbeil benefits from an existing wastewater treatment plant and a sewer network that has been largely implemented across several areas. However, the network remains only partially connected at the household level, limiting its operational efficiency. The Janneh Dam, which is technically designed and partially constructed, stands as one of the most strategic water infrastructure projects in the district, with the potential to significantly improve water availability and long-term service reliability across Jbeil.

In terms of solid waste management, the Hbaline landfill functions as the primary reception and treatment facility for municipal waste generated across the district. The site includes a mechanical sorting unit, representing a critical operational node within the waste management system, although its current capacity and technological limitations constrain its overall effectiveness. Transport infrastructure has improved in recent years, particularly in road quality and inter-village connectivity, thereby strengthening links between coastal areas and inland mountain communities. These improvements have facilitated mobility, economic exchange, and tourism flows. Nonetheless, several mountain roads—especially in the

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southern parts of the Jbeil mountains—still require maintenance and upgrades to enhance accessibility and ensure better territorial integration. At the administrative level, municipalities across the district possess basic governance and service structures. However, most local administrations remain largely non-digitalized and continue to rely on paper-based procedures for documentation and service delivery. This situation increases administrative costs, slows processes, and places additional burdens on citizens seeking municipal services. Taken together, these assets provide a partial but still insufficient foundation for a fully connected and efficiently functioning territory. Their fragmented operations, uneven performance, and limited scalability highlight the need for more coordinated planning, improved institutional cooperation, and collective investment strategies to transform these elements into a coherent, resilient territorial infrastructure system.

CONSTRAINTS & STRUCTURAL BARRIERS

Despite several enabling assets, Jbeil District faces structural constraints that limit the effectiveness, sustainability, and equity of infrastructure and service delivery. These challenges affect multiple sectors and reinforce one another, slowing the district’s overall development trajectory.

Energy supply remains unstable and insufficient to meet growing demand. While the Jbeil Electricity Company provides a degree of local autonomy, electricity production capacity remains limited, and the district continues to rely on incomplete large-scale infrastructure such as the Janneh Dam. The absence of diversified and decentralized renewable energy solutions further increases vulnerability to prolonged supply shortages. Wastewater management also remains incomplete. Although sewer networks have been largely installed, significant additional investment—estimated at USD 200–300 million—is required to connect households and fully operationalize the system. As a result, many communities still rely on septic tanks and wells, contributing to groundwater contamination. Weak enforcement of wastewater management requirements in building permits further aggravates environmental risks. Water security is similarly constrained. The Janneh Dam project requires an additional USD 120 million to be completed, while external funding remains suspended. Intermittent implementation has already led to inefficient resource use, while increasing pollution of natural springs threatens both the domestic water supply and ecological systems. The solid waste system is also under pressure. The Hbaine landfill processes only about half of the incoming waste through its sorting facility, leading to waste accumulation and gradual loss of operational capacity. Without upstream waste reduction and improved sorting practices, the system risks saturation. Mobility and connectivity challenges persist, particularly in mountainous areas. Attempts to introduce shared public transport have largely failed due to limited financial viability and public uptake. In addition, poor road marking and unfinished rural roads continue to affect safety and accessibility. Administrative efficiency remains limited by the absence of digital municipal services. Most municipalities still rely on paper-based

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processes, which increase operational costs, prolong procedures, and impose additional time and travel burdens on residents. Together, these constraints weaken environmental sustainability, economic productivity, and social equity, reinforcing territorial disparities within the district.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTEGRATED TERRITORIAL SERVICES

Despite these challenges, Jbeil District presents strong opportunities to transition toward more connected, resilient, and sustainable service systems.

Decentralized and Renewable Energy Solutions: Solar-powered street lighting, schools, and public buildings offer immediate, scalable solutions to energy deficits. Private-sector engagement in decentralized energy production can reduce pressure on centralized systems while improving service reliability.

Municipal-Scale Wastewater Innovation: Low-cost, small-scale wastewater treatment solutions—such as constructed reed-bed wetlands—provide environmentally sound alternatives suited to village-level implementation, particularly in rural and heritage-sensitive areas.

Collective Water Governance and Advocacy: Unified planning among municipalities can reduce duplication, improve funding efficiency, and strengthen the case for external support. A dedicated lobbying platform for Jbeil could accelerate priority water and wastewater projects and re-mobilize international financing.

Circular Economy Approaches to Solid Waste: Source segregation at the municipal level can significantly reduce pressure on the Hbaline landfill. Private-sector participation in sorting, recycling, and waste-to-energy initiatives presents opportunities for innovation, job creation, and system resilience.

Transport and Safety Improvements: Simple interventions such as road marking can yield immediate safety benefits at relatively low cost. Behavioral change campaigns promoting shared mobility can complement infrastructure investments.

Digital Transformation of Municipal Services: Digitizing administrative procedures can enhance transparency, reduce costs, and improve citizen access to services, while laying the groundwork for data-driven planning and governance.

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KEY ACTIONS FOR CONNECTED TERRITORIES & SERVICES

Building on Jbeil's assets and opportunities, the following strategic actions are proposed to strengthen territorial connectivity and the integration of municipal services.

Strategic Action	Suggested projects
1. Strengthen District-Level Infrastructure Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Jbeil inter-municipal coordination platform for energy, water, wastewater, and waste planning. Develop a shared infrastructure priority map based on environmental risk, service gaps, and population needs.
2. Accelerate Energy Transition and Decentralization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scale up solar-powered lighting for roads, schools, and public facilities. Facilitate private-sector and community-based renewable energy initiatives. Integrate hydropower potential into long-term planning for Janneh Dam.
3. Improve Water and Wastewater Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote municipal-scale treatment solutions, including nature-based systems. Enforce wastewater treatment requirements in building permits. Prohibit septic tanks and wells for wastewater disposal in priority zones. Segment large infrastructure projects into fundable phases.
4. Modernize Solid Waste Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement source segregation at the municipal level. Support private-sector involvement in recycling, sorting, and waste-to-energy solutions. Extend the operational lifespan of Hbaline landfill through upstream waste reduction.
5. Enhance Transport Connectivity and Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve and maintain roads in the southern Jbeil mountains. Introduce road marking and safety measures across the district. Promote shared transport culture through awareness and pilot schemes.
6. Digitize Municipal Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce basic digital municipal platforms for permits, requests, and communication. Improve service accessibility for remote communities.

CONCLUSION: TOWARD A RESILIENT & CONNECTED JBEIL

Integrated services and connected territories are essential for Jbeil District's sustainable development. Reliable energy, secure water, effective wastewater and solid-waste management, safe transport, and modern municipal services underpin social well-being, economic opportunity, and environmental protection. Moving from fragmented, municipality-level actions to coordinated districtwide planning will optimize resources, attract investment, and increase resilience amid national uncertainty. Prioritize decentralized infrastructure, targeted private-sector partnerships, and digital systems to deliver practical, scalable solutions. Anchored between coast and mountains, Jbeil can model integrated territorial services that align governance, environmental stewardship, and infrastructure innovation to promote inclusive, market-oriented growth and long-term territorial cohesion and social equity.

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II. Toward Integrating Agriculture, Environment, and Local Economies

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BACKGROUND

Jbeil District represents one of Lebanon’s most valuable and complex living landscapes, where agriculture, forests, water systems, coastal and mountain ecosystems, and human livelihoods have evolved together over centuries. Its geography links Mediterranean marine ecosystems with fertile river valleys, forested mountain slopes, and high-altitude agricultural plateaus, historically supporting diversified livelihoods based on farming, forestry, fisheries, and agro-food production. Today, these interconnected systems face increasing pressure. Climate variability, water pollution, and overexploitation, forest degradation, uncontrolled urban expansion, and the prolonged economic crisis are gradually eroding the ecological foundations of local livelihoods. Agriculture remains largely dominated by small-scale producers who face rising production costs, declining profitability, and limited access to markets. At the same time, forests and protected areas—although rich in biodiversity—are increasingly exposed to fire risks, land conversion, and limited management capacity. Water resources, one of the district’s most strategic assets, remain unevenly distributed and poorly regulated, while pollution continues to affect key basins, including the Ibrahim River.

Despite these challenges, Jbeil retains strong enabling conditions for an integrated landscape approach. Its abundant natural resources, skilled human capital, rich cultural and natural heritage, and active local institutions offer important opportunities. If managed holistically, these assets can support resilient agriculture, healthier ecosystems, and diversified livelihoods, thereby strengthening food security and reducing migration pressures.

AGRICULTURAL, ENVIRONMENTAL & FOREST LANDSCAPE ASSETS

Jbeil District possesses significant agricultural, environmental, and forest landscape assets that form the ecological and productive foundation of the territory. The district hosts a diverse mosaic of rainfed and irrigated farming systems, including fruit orchards, olive groves, horticulture, and small-scale livestock production adapted to variations in altitude and microclimates. This diversity is reinforced by strong traditional agricultural knowledge and a rich agro-food heritage, providing an important basis for developing agroecological and climate-resilient farming practices. Water resources represent another strategic asset. Surface and groundwater systems—including rivers, springs, and aquifers—support agriculture,

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domestic water supply, ecosystems, and coastal and marine health. In particular, the Ibrahim River basin constitutes a key ecological and economic corridor linking the mountainous hinterland to the Mediterranean coast. Forested landscapes and protected areas also play a critical role in maintaining ecological balance and biodiversity. Sites such as Bentaël Nature Reserve, the Arz Jaj Cedar forests, and the Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve form an important ecological backbone for the district, providing biodiversity conservation, watershed protection, carbon storage, and opportunities for nature-based livelihoods. Along the coast, marine ecosystems support fisheries, tourism activities, and other ecosystem services, although their health is closely tied to upstream land-use practices and water quality. Complementing these natural assets is a strong base of human capital and local institutions, including municipalities, cooperatives, NGOs, and community initiatives. Together with the district's terraced landscapes, irrigation heritage, and culturally significant forest areas, these elements create a strong institutional and socio-cultural foundation for integrated and sustainable landscape management.

CONSTRAINTS & BARRIERS TO SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPES AND LIVELIHOODS

Despite its strong asset base, Jbeil District faces several systemic barriers that undermine the sustainability of its landscapes and rural livelihoods. Governance remains fragmented, with agriculture, water, forestry, environment, and urban planning addressed through separate institutions and policies that often lack coordination. Although several strategic plans and studies have been developed—such as UNDP-supported master plans—many remain largely unimplemented, limiting their impact on the ground. Water resources are increasingly under pressure due to pollution and overexploitation. Untreated wastewater, agricultural runoff, and the proliferation of illegal wells continue to degrade water quality in rivers, springs, and aquifers. At the same time, inefficient irrigation practices accelerate resource depletion and affect downstream ecosystems, including coastal and marine environments. Forest landscapes also face growing risks. Limited forest management capacity, weak monitoring, and ongoing land-use change increase vulnerability to wildfires, biodiversity loss, and broader ecosystem degradation. Agricultural support systems remain insufficient. Farmers often benefit from short-term training initiatives but lack sustained technical follow-up and extension services, limiting the adoption of improved practices in pesticide management, water efficiency, soil health, and climate adaptation. At the same time, the economic viability of rural livelihoods is weakening. Small-scale producers face rising production costs, limited market access, and low levels of value addition, contributing to increasing economic vulnerability and encouraging rural outmigration. Finally, repeated consultation processes without visible implementation have generated frustration among local stakeholders. This has gradually eroded trust and reduced engagement in development initiatives, further complicating efforts to advance coordinated landscape management.

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OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTEGRATED LANDSCAPE-BASED DEVELOPMENT

Jbeil District presents strong opportunities to adopt a living landscapes approach that integrates ecological integrity with livelihood resilience.

Agroecological and climate-resilient agriculture: Landscape diversity supports low-input, adaptive farming systems that enhance productivity while conserving soil, water, and biodiversity.

Integrated water and watershed management: Protecting river basins and recharge zones can simultaneously improve water security, agricultural productivity, forest health, and coastal ecosystems.

Sustainable forest management: Improved forest governance can reduce fire risks, protect biodiversity, and support eco-tourism and non-timber forest products.

Linkages between agriculture, forests, and agro-food value chains: Strengthening connections between producers, processors, and markets can increase profitability and employment.

Youth engagement and local stewardship: Capacity-building and awareness initiatives can empower youth and communities to steward landscapes, reduce migration, and foster innovation.

KEY ACTIONS FOR RESILIENT LIVING LANDSCAPES & LIVELIHOODS

Strategic Action	Suggested projects
1. Strengthen Integrated Territorial Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve coordination among agricultural, water, forestry, and environmental authorities. • Reactivate and implement existing land-use, water, and environmental plans.
2. Protect and Restore Water Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in wastewater treatment, water quality monitoring, and enforcement. • Promote efficient irrigation and watershed-based planning.
3. Support Climate-Resilient Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish sustained extension services with field-based follow-up. • Promote soil conservation, integrated pest management, and climate-adaptive cropping systems.
4. Enhance Forest Management and Fire Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support community-based forest management and fire risk reduction. • Strengthen monitoring and conservation of protected areas.

5. Strengthen Livelihoods and Value Chains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an agricultural and agro-food roadmap linking farmers to processors and markets. • Support small-scale value addition and diversified income sources.
6. Integrate Urban Planning with Environmental Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforce land-use planning to protect agricultural land, forests, and river corridors. • Prevent environmentally destructive urban sprawl, particularly along the Ibrahim River.
7. Rebuild Trust Through Action-Oriented Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pair awareness workshops with funded implementation pathways. • Demonstrate early, visible actions to restore stakeholder confidence.

CONCLUSION: TOWARD RESILIENT LIVING LANDSCAPES IN JBEIL

Jbeil District embodies a rare convergence of agriculture, forests, water systems, marine ecosystems, and human livelihoods. Safeguarding this living landscape requires a shift from sectoral, fragmented interventions toward an integrated, landscape-based development model. By aligning agriculture, water, forest, and environmental governance; investing in sustained support for farmers and communities; and enforcing responsible land-use planning, Jbeil can become a national model for resilient landscapes and livelihoods. Such an approach would strengthen food and water security, protect biodiversity, reduce rural vulnerability, and contribute meaningfully to Lebanon's long-term environmental and socio-economic resilience.

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III. Toward Sustainable and Integrated Tourism Development

Collaborator: James Raad⁷

BACKGROUND

Jbeil District is one of the most historically rich and culturally layered territories in the Mediterranean. Archaeological evidence indicates continuous human settlement since the seventh millennium BCE—an exceptional continuity shared by only a few places worldwide. Over thousands of years, more than twelve successive civilizations have left their imprint on the district, creating a uniquely diverse and living cultural landscape. Alongside this deep historical legacy, Jbeil is endowed with remarkable natural diversity, including coastal ecosystems, river valleys, forested mountains, and high-altitude plateaus. The interaction between these natural and cultural assets gives the district a distinctive identity and provides strong foundations for sustainable, inclusive, and creative tourism development. Despite this exceptional resource base, tourism in Jbeil District operates below its full territorial and economic potential. Visitor flows remain largely concentrated in the historic city of Byblos, its World Heritage archaeological site, and a few well-known mountain villages. This spatial concentration reflects the uneven distribution of tourism infrastructure, services, and market visibility across the district. Many rural communities remain weakly integrated into the tourism system, offering limited tourism products and possessing insufficient service capacity and visitor readiness. Broader structural challenges reinforce these imbalances. Tourism services are often costly or unevenly available, connectivity between coastal and mountain areas remains limited, and hospitality standards vary significantly. In addition, the district lacks structured professional training pathways in tourism, guiding, and hospitality, limiting workforce development and service quality. At the same time, the creative and cultural economies—rooted in traditional crafts, arts, and local skills—remain underdeveloped and insufficiently integrated into the tourism value chain. Strengthening these linkages is essential to unlock the district’s full tourism potential and distribute benefits more evenly across communities.

HERITAGE & LANDSCAPE ASSETS

Jbeil District possesses an exceptionally dense concentration of cultural, historical, ecological, and spiritual resources, positioning it among the most distinctive territories in Lebanon and the Eastern Mediterranean. Its identity has been shaped by millennia of continuous human presence, reflected in an extraordinary cultural depth that spans prehistoric settlements, the rise of Phoenician urbanism, successive Roman–Byzantine and Crusader influences, and the long-standing presence of early Maronite communities. This uninterrupted accumulation of

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Civilizations forms a rare chronological record within the Mediterranean region. Complementing this historical legacy is a rich body of crafts, traditions, and intangible heritage maintained through the intergenerational transmission of artisanal and cultural practices in Byblos and in village clusters throughout the district. Activities such as weaving, traditional food processing, and religious rituals continue to embody local identity and cultural continuity.

Jbeil also benefits from remarkable ecological diversity, ranging from coastal ecosystems to forested mountain landscapes and distinctive geological formations. Notable natural sites include the caves of Afqa, Roueis, and Ain El Lebneh, while three officially designated reserves—Bentael Nature Reserve, the Arz Jaj Cedars Reserve, and the Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve (shared with Kesrouane)—form an important ecological network supporting biodiversity conservation and nature-based tourism. The district also holds deep religious and spiritual significance, reflected in historic monasteries, early Christian sites, pilgrimage routes, and cave hermitages, all of which offer strong potential for developing inclusive cultural and spiritual tourism itineraries. Despite this wealth of cultural, natural, and creative assets, many rural communities remain only marginally integrated into the district’s tourism economy. Numerous villages possess valuable cultural landscapes, agricultural resources, and artisanal traditions, yet these assets are rarely incorporated into structured tourism products or routes. Limited infrastructure, weak interpretation, and restricted market access constrain local participation, leaving tourism activity largely concentrated in a few urban and coastal centers and limiting its potential to support more inclusive territorial development.

CONSTRAINTS & BARRIERS TO TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Despite Jbeil District’s significant tourism potential, several systemic constraints continue to limit the development of a cohesive and inclusive tourism economy. Governance remains fragmented, with municipalities often operating in isolation and collaboration across administrative boundaries remaining limited. Administrative discontinuities further compound this fragmentation following electoral cycles, which disrupt long-term planning, investment continuity, and the implementation of district-wide tourism initiatives. Infrastructure and hospitality capacity also remain uneven, particularly in rural and mountainous areas. Many villages lack adequate accommodations, visitor facilities, and service standards, which reduces their ability to host visitors and deliver consistent tourism experiences. Weak connectivity between villages, along with limited site-specific infrastructure and amenities, further constrains the integration of these areas into broader tourism circuits, reinforcing the concentration of visitor flows in a few established coastal and urban destinations. Human capital and professional capacity represent additional challenges.

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The tourism sector suffers from a shortage of accredited guides and limited vocational training opportunities in hospitality, visitor management, and service quality. This skills gap affects the quality of tourism services and restricts employment opportunities for local youth. At the same time, the district’s creative and cultural economies remain underdeveloped and insufficiently integrated into tourism value chains. Traditional crafts, artisanal production, and local arts often lack adequate marketing, support for innovation, and access to diverse markets, limiting their economic contribution. Weak integration between coastal and mountain areas further reduces the coherence of the visitor experience and limits opportunities to develop multi-day itineraries that showcase the district’s full cultural and ecological diversity. In addition, the limited use of digital platforms, interactive tools, and modern interpretation methods restricts the district’s visibility and its capacity to engage contemporary audiences. As a result, tourism activity remains spatially concentrated, with economic benefits unevenly distributed across the district. Without targeted interventions, Jbeil’s rich cultural and natural assets risk remaining underutilized, and tourism’s potential to drive inclusive territorial development will remain constrained.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTEGRATED & PLACE-BASED TOURISM

Despite the structural and systemic constraints identified, Jbeil District exhibits substantial opportunities to develop a more integrated, resilient, and sustainable tourism model. These opportunities are closely aligned with global trends in experiential, nature-based, and heritage-driven tourism, and they leverage the district’s unique combination of cultural, ecological, and creative assets.

Growing demand for authentic and experiential tourism: International and domestic travelers increasingly seek immersive experiences that combine cultural authenticity with natural exploration. Jbeil’s long-standing civilizational heritage, intergenerational craft traditions, and diverse landscapes—from coastal ecosystems to forested mountains—position the district to respond effectively to this market shift.

Significant ecological and conservation assets: The presence of three formally designated nature reserves—Bentael, Arz Jaj Cedars, and Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve—provides a foundation for responsible and sustainable tourism types such as eco-tourism, nature-based tourism, and adventure tourism. These reserves also offer opportunities to link biodiversity conservation with visitor engagement, environmental education, and community-based stewardship.

Distributed cultural heritage across the district: Beyond Byblos, numerous villages possess rich cultural and historical resources that are currently underutilized. Their inclusion in thematic tourism clusters—such as heritage trails, craft circuits, and religious pilgrimage

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routes—can promote more balanced visitor distribution and foster integrated tourism networks.

High potential for youth engagement and innovation: Young residents represent a largely untapped human capital base for professionalized guiding, digital storytelling, eco-hosting, and creative entrepreneurship. Engaging youth in these activities can enhance service quality, strengthen the local tourism workforce, and stimulate innovation across cultural and ecological tourism products.

Integration with creative and agricultural economies: Jbeil’s artisanal crafts, local arts, and agricultural products offer opportunities to develop diversified tourism value chains. Linking these sectors with tourism can create sustainable income streams, enhance visitor experiences, and reinforce the authenticity and cultural distinctiveness of the district’s offerings.

Together, these factors indicate that Jbeil has the potential to evolve from a predominantly site-based tourism model—focused on a few coastal and mountain hotspots—into a district-wide, integrated tourism system. Such a model would combine cultural and ecological assets, strengthen social and economic connectivity among villages, and embed sustainability principles into both visitor experiences and local development outcomes. Evidence from comparable Mediterranean regions suggests that integrated, cluster-based tourism systems not only enhance visitor satisfaction but also maximize local socio-economic benefits, fostering inclusive territorial development.

KEY ACTIONS FOR A SUSTAINABLE TOURISM MODEL

Building on Jbeil’s unique cultural, natural, and creative assets, as well as the opportunities identified for integrated tourism, a set of strategic actions is needed to transform the district into a cohesive, high-quality, and inclusive tourism system. These actions are designed to address structural constraints, enhance connectivity across the district, strengthen service quality, and ensure that tourism benefits are equitably shared among communities. The proposed measures are organized around six interlinked pillars.

Strategic Action	Suggested projects
1. Strengthen Territorial Governance and Institutional Continuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and reinforce the established Jbeil Destination Management Organization to connect municipalities, nature reserves, cultural institutions, and private-sector actors, facilitating joint planning and implementation. Conduct a GIS-enabled tourism asset inventory to document village-level heritage, creative industries, and natural resources, providing robust evidence base for planning and promotion.

2. Enhance Social Connectivity and Coastal-Mountain Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance and upgrade the existing initiative of Jbeil Eco Museum “Teltayn El Bled”, elevating it through product innovation and improved service quality. • Develop multiple thematic village clusters based on cultural, ecological, geographic, or creative linkages to strengthen the coherence of tourism circuits, based on the Jbeil Eco Museum approach. • Connect clusters through curated historical and cultural routes, such as the Phoenician Route, the Maronite Trail, and the Coastal Circuit. • Improve infrastructure and mobility to key heritage and natural sites, including alternative access routes to the Mar Charbel shrine in Annaya, to facilitate multi-day itineraries and integrated visitor experiences into a larger number of villages.
3. Revitalize Heritage and Creative Economies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a district-wide historical timeline, including a digital interactive version, to enhance interpretation and visitor engagement. • Support artisans, artists, farmers, and young entrepreneurs through creative economy incubation, product development, and skills enhancement. • Promote living heritage experiences, enabling visitors to engage directly in crafts making, culinary traditions, and cultural practices. • Establish market access pathways for local crafts and agro-food products within tourism circuits, linking cultural and economic value chains.
4. Build Local Skills and Professionalize Tourism Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish accredited training programs for young guides, and hospitality professionals to raise service standards. • Strengthen vocational programs in tourism services and digital storytelling to support innovation and quality. • Partner with universities and training centers to develop competency-based curricula aligned with the district’s tourism value chains.
5. Improve Infrastructure and Sustainable Visitor Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support small and medium scale hospitality services, with focus on rural areas, through financial incentives and adherence to quality standards and sustainability practices. • Upgrade signage, trails, waste management systems, and public amenities, particularly in mountain villages. • Ensure that infrastructure development integrates environmental impact assessments and climate resilience principles.
6. Modernize Marketing and Digital Interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a unified digital platform for Jbeil tourism, integrating interactive maps, booking options, thematic routes, and village profiles. • Introduce immersive technologies, such as augmented reality at heritage sites and mobile-based interpretive content, to enhance visitor engagement. • Utilize data analytics to monitor visitor behavior, evaluate experiences, and continuously refine tourism products and services.

CONCLUSION: TOWARD AN EQUITABLE & RESILIENT TOURISM SECTOR

Jbeil District possesses the ecological, cultural, and creative assets required to serve as a benchmark for sustainable tourism development in Lebanon. Realizing this potential necessitates a transition from a fragmented, site-focused tourism model to an integrated, district-wide system that emphasizes social connectivity, inclusive value chains, and evidence-based planning and governance. By reinforcing institutional coordination, investing in human and professional capacity, enhancing creative and cultural value chains, and systematically integrating rural communities into tourism circuits, Jbeil can establish a resilient and high-quality tourism economy. Such a system would optimize the distribution of economic benefits, strengthen local livelihoods, preserve and activate the district’s unique heritage, and position Jbeil as a model for sustainable and innovative tourism development in the region.

IV. Toward Innovation and Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

Collaborators: Dr. Joelle Nader⁸, Tarek Matar⁹

BACKGROUND

Jbeil District is a territorially diverse and economically interconnected area, extending from the Mediterranean coast and historic urban centers to rural hinterlands and mountainous communities. The district's long-term economic resilience, social cohesion, and ability to retain young people increasingly depend on the vitality of local entrepreneurship, the adaptability of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and the effective use of innovation, technology, and digital transformation to support inclusive development. In the context of Lebanon's prolonged economic crisis, entrepreneurship and innovation have become essential survival mechanisms for local economies. As national institutions struggle to provide services, regulate markets, and stimulate growth, districts such as Jbeil must increasingly rely on local resources, decentralized initiatives, and public-private collaboration to sustain livelihoods and generate employment, particularly for youth and skilled graduates. Jbeil benefits from a strong combination of assets, including rich cultural heritage, tourism potential, academic institutions, and a growing base of entrepreneurial talent. However, these resources remain fragmented and underutilized due to administrative bottlenecks, limited access to financing, weak coordination between public institutions and entrepreneurs, and insufficient digital infrastructure. Innovation initiatives often emerge in isolation and lack the institutional frameworks needed to scale or connect across sectors. Strengthening innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems in Jbeil is therefore a key priority for territorial development. Simplified administrative processes, improved access to finance, and stronger collaboration among municipalities, universities, businesses, and youth are essential to supporting sustainable economic opportunities and reducing outmigration.

TERRITORIAL INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP ASSETS

Jbeil District possesses a range of tangible and intangible assets that could form the foundation of a place-based innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem if strategically mobilized. Its rich cultural and religious tourism potential offers a high-value economic lever for entrepreneurship in heritage services, guiding, creative industries, hospitality, and digital tourism solutions. The Port of Jbeil and the district's coastline, while currently underutilized, present opportunities for sustainable blue-tourism startups, marine services, cultural events, and small-scale coastal enterprises. The district also benefits from substantial human capital and academic resources. Universities, including LAU and other higher education institutions,

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provide skills, research capacity, and potential for youth-driven innovation. Yet linkages between academic knowledge and local productive sectors remain weak and largely informal, limiting opportunities for applied innovation and entrepreneurship. Jbeil hosts a diverse base of SMEs across tourism, crafts, retail, and emerging green activities. Many local entrepreneurs demonstrate adaptability and resilience, but most operate in survival mode due to limited access to finance, complex regulatory frameworks, and constrained market opportunities. Civil society and local institutions provide an additional strategic asset. Workshop discussions highlighted strong readiness among municipalities, NGOs, entrepreneurs, and academic actors to engage in more coordinated collaboration. This social capital represents a critical, often underutilized resource for building a functional innovation ecosystem, fostering collective action, and linking local knowledge, creativity, and enterprise to sustainable territorial development.

CONSTRAINTS & STRUCTURAL BARRIERS

Despite its considerable assets, Jbeil District faces several systemic barriers that continue to constrain innovation and entrepreneurship. Administrative and regulatory bottlenecks remain a major challenge. Lengthy incorporation procedures, reliance on paper-based systems, and fragmented administrative responsibilities discourage formalization, delay business operations, and disproportionately affect youth-led and small-scale initiatives, particularly in sectors requiring rapid adaptation or technology integration. Access to finance is also limited. Entrepreneurs encounter significant difficulties in securing contract-based funding and early-stage bridge financing. While donor and NGO programs exist, they are typically short-term, project-based, and poorly aligned with business cycles, limiting opportunities for innovation, especially in technology-driven and environmentally oriented ventures. Weak public-private linkages further inhibit ecosystem development. Municipalities, public institutions, and corporate actors often operate in silos, with minimal structured interfaces, strategic alliances, or value-chain integration across the district. This fragmentation extends to the broader innovation support ecosystem: while ideas for digital hubs, stakeholder platforms, and youth directories exist, the absence of a coordinating framework prevents effective knowledge sharing, mentorship, and matchmaking between investors, innovators, and local institutions. Finally, several high-potential sectors remain underexploited. Thematic rural tourism, sustainable waste management—including wood-residue valorization and composting—and agri-food innovation are constrained by limited technical support and weak business development services. Collectively, these structural barriers hinder the scaling, replication, and cross-sector integration of entrepreneurial initiatives, reducing the district’s ability to leverage its resources for inclusive economic growth and sustainable territorial development.

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OPPORTUNITIES FOR INNOVATION-LED TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT

Despite these constraints, Jbeil District presents clear opportunities to unlock innovation-driven growth through targeted, realistic interventions.

Digital Transformation as an Enabler: Digitizing administrative procedures at the municipal level offers immediate gains in efficiency, transparency, and cost reduction, while creating a more enabling environment for SMEs and startups.

Circular Economy and Green Innovation: Innovative waste management solutions—particularly the sustainable use of wood residues and composting—represent high-impact opportunities for job creation, environmental protection, and SME development aligned with local resource availability.

Cultural Tourism and Creative Entrepreneurship: Activating cultural and religious tourism through innovative services, digital platforms, and youth-led enterprises can generate rapid economic returns while reinforcing Jbeil’s identity and heritage.

Skills Development and Youth Integration: The creation of training clusters linking universities, vocational institutions, and local businesses—especially in tourism and hospitality—can improve employability and facilitate smoother school-to-work transitions.

Place-Based Collaboration Platforms: Even low-cost coordination mechanisms—such as shared information platforms or district-level working groups—can significantly improve alignment between municipalities, entrepreneurs, academia, and donors.

KEY ACTIONS FOR INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN JBEIL

Building on local priorities identified during the workshop, the following strategic actions are proposed:

Strategic Action	Suggested projects
1. Simplify and Digitize Business Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce digital registration and licensing services at the municipal level. Streamline incorporation procedures for SMEs and startups.
2. Improve Access to Entrepreneurial Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop contract-based funding mechanisms linked to local service provision. Pilot bridge-financing schemes for early-stage startups.
3. Activate High-Impact Economic Sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support innovative waste management SMEs (wood residues, composting). Promote thematic rural tourism and organized cultural activities.
4. Strengthen Public–Private–Academic Linkages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish structured collaboration channels between universities and local businesses. Encourage corporate partnerships and joint ventures.

5. Support Youth-Led and Creative Initiatives

- Create a district-level youth entrepreneurship directory.
- Develop training clusters for tourism, hospitality, and creative industries.

6. Promote Jbeil as an Innovation Territory

- Support SMEs opening shops in the historic center of Byblos and other key villages across the district.
- Develop a district-level tourism and entrepreneurship information platform.

CONCLUSION: TOWARD AN INNOVATIVE & ENTREPRENEURIAL JBEIL

The Jbeil District stands at a critical inflection point. The challenge it faces is not a lack of ideas, talent, or entrepreneurial energy, but the absence of enabling systems that allow innovation to scale, connect, and endure. Fragmented administration, limited financing tools, and weak coordination continue to constrain the district’s economic potential, despite strong local readiness for collaboration. By prioritizing a small number of catalytic actions—digitalized administration, access to contract-based finance, activation of cultural tourism and green innovation, and stronger public–private–academic linkages—Jbeil can unlock tangible short-term gains while laying the foundations for long-term structural transformation. Positioned between heritage and modernity, coast and mountains, Jbeil has the potential to emerge as a national model for decentralized innovation and inclusive entrepreneurship. Translating this potential into impact will depend on collective commitment: moving from consensus to execution, from isolated initiatives to integrated solutions, and from untapped assets to sustainable local livelihoods.

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V. Toward Inclusive and Resilient Community Wellbeing

Collaborators: Dr. Samantha Borkhoche ¹⁰, Hasmig Khoury ¹¹

BACKGROUND

Jbeil District is one of Lebanon's most historically rich and socially diverse territories, with a long continuum of human settlement, strong cultural identity, and resilient community structures. Spanning urban centers, coastal towns, rural villages, and mountainous areas, the district functions as a living social system where the wellbeing of its population—across health, education, and social dimensions—is central to resilience, cohesion, and long-term development. In recent years, however, community wellbeing in Jbeil has been increasingly strained by Lebanon's compounded crises. Economic collapse, rising unemployment, inflation, weakened public services, and conflict-related stress have limited access to healthcare, education, and social protection. Vulnerable groups—including rural residents, low-income households, women, unemployed adults, persons with disabilities, and families facing mobility or schooling constraints—experience disproportionate barriers to participation and opportunity. These challenges are less about the absence of institutions or skills than about fragmentation, limited access to information, transportation obstacles, social stigma—particularly around mental health and disability—and a lack of sustained, community-centered platforms for engagement. Existing interventions are often sectoral, short-term, or concentrated in urban centers, limiting lasting impact. Strengthening wellbeing in Jbeil requires integrated, place-based approaches that connect health, education, employment, and social inclusion within shared community spaces, creating tangible environments where dignity, participation, and belonging are realized in practice.

COMMUNITY & SOCIAL ASSETS

Jbeil District possesses a range of social, institutional, and human assets that provide a strong foundation for enhancing community wellbeing if effectively coordinated and mobilized. The district hosts universities, technical institutes, schools, healthcare providers, NGOs, faith-based organizations, and community initiatives, collectively representing significant human and institutional capacity. Academic institutions contribute expertise, student and alumni networks, and research potential that can support education-to-employment pathways and community outreach. Local associations, charitable organizations, and informal community networks play a critical role in service delivery and social support, particularly during crises. Their proximity to communities, fosters trust and responsiveness, though their impact is often constrained by limited coordination and sustainability. Public spaces such as souks, municipal

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squares, beaches, and village centers—despite uneven maintenance—offer opportunities for inclusive, low-barrier activities that integrate social, economic, educational, and health-related functions. Promising inclusion-oriented initiatives, such as programs that create employment opportunities for individuals with special needs, demonstrate that stigma can be challenged and productive inclusion achieved when the right actors collaborate. Despite these strengths, the overall impact of Jbeil’s community and social assets remains limited by fragmentation, lack of visibility, and the absence of unifying platforms that connect services, opportunities, and populations across the district. Harnessing these assets through coordinated, district-wide approaches could significantly strengthen social cohesion, inclusion, and community resilience.

CONSTRAINTS & BARRIERS TO COMMUNITY WELLBEING

Several interrelated structural barriers continue to undermine health, education, and social cohesion in Jbeil District. Access to information and services is often fragmented, leaving residents without clear guidance on available programs, training opportunities, or employment pathways. This gap disproportionately affects vulnerable groups, including unemployed adults, women outside the labor force, and families in remote villages. Transportation and mobility constraints further limit access to schools, healthcare facilities, and social activities. Rural populations, persons with disabilities, and low-income households are particularly affected, increasing risks of educational dropout and social isolation. Persistent social stigma also undermines wellbeing: mental health issues remain widely stigmatized despite rising stress and psychosocial distress linked to economic hardship and conflict. At the same time, persons with disabilities continue to face negative perceptions that limit social and economic participation. Education-to-employment linkages are weak, particularly for individuals outside traditional academic pathways, including alums, mid-career job seekers, and adults over 30. Many wellbeing initiatives remain short-term or sectoral, lacking sustained funding, cross-sector integration, and mechanisms for scaling or replication. Together, these barriers constrain social participation, reinforce inequality, and weaken trust between communities and institutions. Without coordinated, long-term, and inclusive approaches, the district risks perpetuating disparities, limiting the effectiveness of existing social assets, and undermining resilience, cohesion, and opportunities for meaningful community engagement.

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OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTEGRATED & COMMUNITY-CENTERED WELLBEING

Despite these challenges, Jbeil District presents strong opportunities to advance community wellbeing through integrated, inclusive, and locally grounded approaches.

Community Markets as Multidimensional Platforms: Envisioned not merely as commercial spaces, the creation of recurring, rotating community markets hosted across different urban neighborhoods and rural villages would function as a unifying social infrastructure that integrates economic activity, access to employment, health awareness, cultural expression, and social interaction.

Inclusive Economic Participation: By connecting local merchants, farmers, artisans, and SMEs directly with consumers, community markets can strengthen local livelihoods while increasing visibility for marginalized groups, including women and persons with disabilities.

Expanded Employment and Career Access: Integrating job-matching and career orientation components—extending beyond university job fairs—can open pathways for alumni, youth, and adults seeking career transitions, helping counter the perception that meaningful employment opportunities exist only outside the region.

Preventive Health and Mental Health Awareness: Community-based health awareness activities focused on prevention—such as nutrition, exercise, smoking cessation, and mental wellbeing—can improve public health literacy without the risks associated with diagnosis in contexts lacking affordable treatment options. Mental health outreach, in particular, offers a critical opportunity to normalize dialogue, reduce stigma, and connect individuals to support in a non-threatening environment.

Cultural and Creative Engagement: Integrating Theater, performances, and cultural activities into community platforms strengthens social cohesion, fosters intergenerational interaction, and reinforces a sense of belonging and shared identity.

Evidence of Readiness for Collaboration: The workshop demonstrated strong willingness among academia, municipalities, NGOs, and private actors to collaborate around shared wellbeing goals, providing a solid foundation for coordinated action.

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KEY ACTIONS FOR COMMUNITY WELLBEING IN JBEIL

Building on identified needs and opportunities, the following strategic actions are proposed:

Strategic Action	Suggested projects
1. Create Inclusive Community Platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a rotating community market across urban and rural areas. Design markets as multifunctional spaces integrating economic, social, educational, and health activities.
2. Improve Access to Employment and Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate job-matching and career orientation services into community platforms. Extend access beyond students to alumni and mid-career job seekers.
3. Promote Preventive Health and Mental Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver community-based health awareness sessions focused on prevention. Implement mental health awareness and destigmatization campaigns with expert involvement.
4. Advance Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support employment and skills development initiatives for persons with disabilities. Promote visibility of inclusive success stories to challenge stigma.
5. Strengthen Education and Workforce Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop training clusters linked to local economic sectors. Address transport and access barriers affecting students and trainees.
6. Enhance Information Sharing and Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create accessible information channels linking services, opportunities, and communities. Strengthen coordination between municipalities, NGOs, and educational institutions.

CONCLUSION

Community wellbeing in Jbeil District depends not only on expanding health, education, and social services, but on creating shared spaces where information, opportunity, dignity, and participation intersect. The district's primary challenge lies in fragmentation—not in the absence of ideas, institutions, or human capital. By investing in integrated, community-centered platforms such as rotating community markets, strengthening education-to-employment pathways, promoting preventive and mental health awareness, and advancing the inclusion of vulnerable populations, Jbeil can reinforce social cohesion while improving livelihoods and quality of life. Positioned between strong community traditions and emerging social challenges, Jbeil has the opportunity to become a national reference for inclusive, place-based wellbeing strategies. Achieving this will require sustained collaboration, long-term commitment, and a shift from isolated interventions toward holistic approaches that place people—rather than sectors—at the center of development.

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CONCLUSION & PERSPECTIVES

Jbeil District's foremost challenge is not a lack of resources, ideas, or local capacity, but persistent fragmentation in governance and sectoral interventions. In a national context characterized by weakened central institutions and uncertain long-term public investment, building territorial resilience requires coordinated, decentralized, and action-oriented strategies at the district level. The district's sustainable development depends on its ability to function as an integrated system. Reliable energy, water security, wastewater management, solid waste services, transport, and digital infrastructure are not merely technical issues—they are critical enablers for sustainable agriculture, forest and coastal protection, tourism, entrepreneurship, and social inclusion. Protecting water basins, forests, agricultural land, and coastal ecosystems is inseparable from safeguarding livelihoods, ensuring food security, and supporting long-term economic viability, while tourism, innovation, and creative industries rely on functioning infrastructure, skilled human capital, and cohesive communities. Effective governance must prioritize integration by establishing district-level coordination mechanisms that align municipal actions, guide investments, and reduce duplication. Decentralized and pragmatic solutions—such as renewable energy systems, village-level wastewater treatment, circular waste initiatives, community-based forest management, and digitally enabled municipal services—can deliver faster, lower-risk, and locally owned results. Livelihoods and inclusion must remain central to development strategies. Policies in agriculture, tourism, innovation, and social wellbeing should be evaluated for their ability to generate decent work, retain youth, reduce inequality, and rebuild trust between citizens and institutions. By leveraging its cultural depth, geographic diversity, active municipalities, academic institutions, and civil society networks, Jbeil can serve as a national model for integrated, resilient, and inclusive territorial development, demonstrating how infrastructure, environment, economy, and society can be aligned toward a sustainable future.

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