



SEPTEMBER 10-15, 2025

## STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING HISTORIC CITIES' RESILIENCE TO DISASTERS

# EARTHEN ARCHITECTURE QAA CASE

Siame - Hanna ISHAC  
Vice President CIVVIH  
REPRESENTATIVE ICOMOS HPF at UN-HABITAT  
Architect Urban planner Director of Heritage

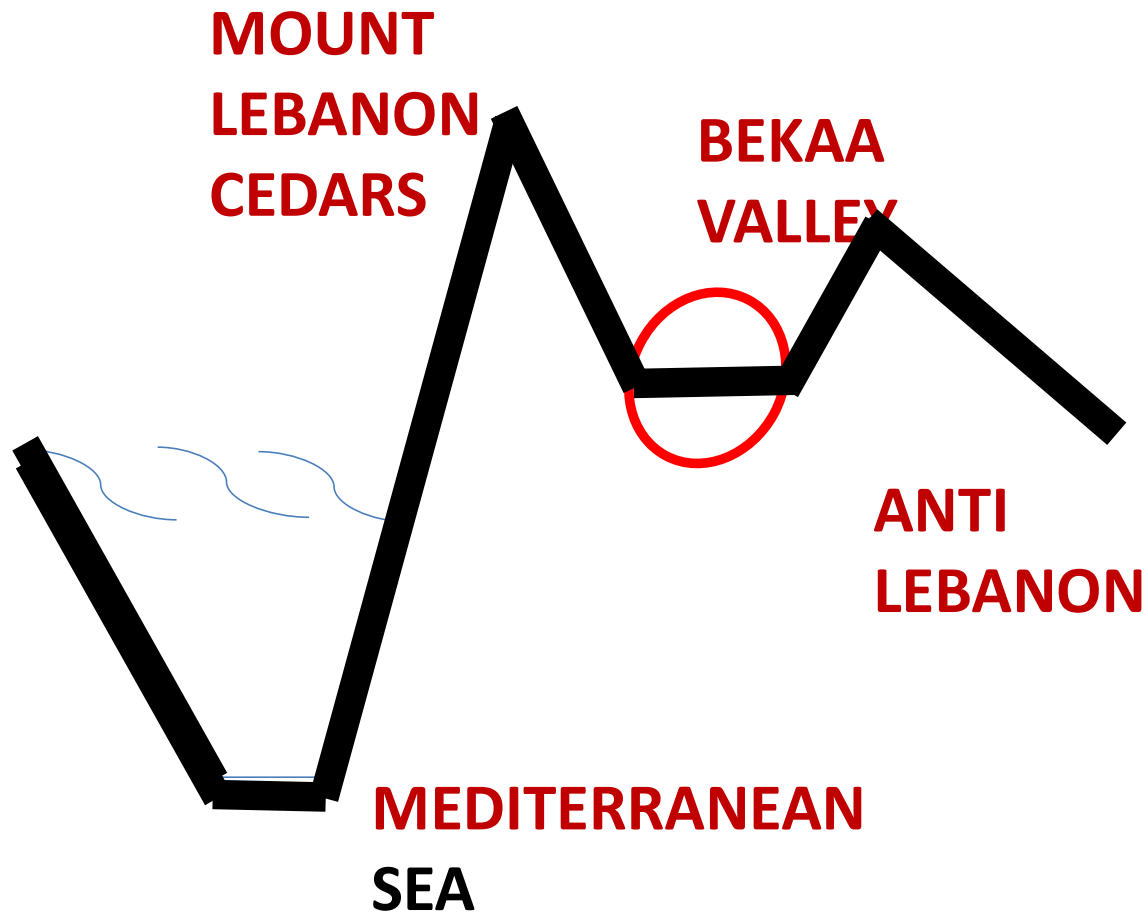
Collaborating partners:  
Alia Fares - Archaeologist, QHRP Project director, Heritage Education Program NGO  
Salam Kallas - Local active citizen, HIMAM NGO  
Nicolas Matar - HIMAM NGO and ex-el-Qaa mayor

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## STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING HISTORIC CITIES' RESILIENCE TO DISASTERS

# THEMA 01: Living Heritage and Urban Resilience: Integrating Preservation and Development in Historic Cities, Towns, and Villages

## CONTEXT



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**Mudbrick earthen architecture  
has been used for millennia in  
Lebanon's Beqaa valley;  
QAA , TAANAYEL ....**

**We observe remains of earthen  
construction in BEKAA villages  
and some villages in the north of  
LEBANON**

*(mixed typologies)*



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## BEKAA LANDSCAPE



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**This typical construction has  
been employed since 5000  
years in the region,**

**Many cities, many imperial  
sites was built by Mudbrick and  
still preserved**

**Persépolis (Iran), Nile Valley  
(Egypt )**

**SYRIA(DEIR ATTIEH)**



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## QAA CASE EARTHEN ARCHITECTURE

Constructive model that has  
been disappearing for decades

The village of QAA has witnessed  
many devastating calamities over  
recent decades

It is an example of many villages  
in Lebanon who switched to  
concrete construction



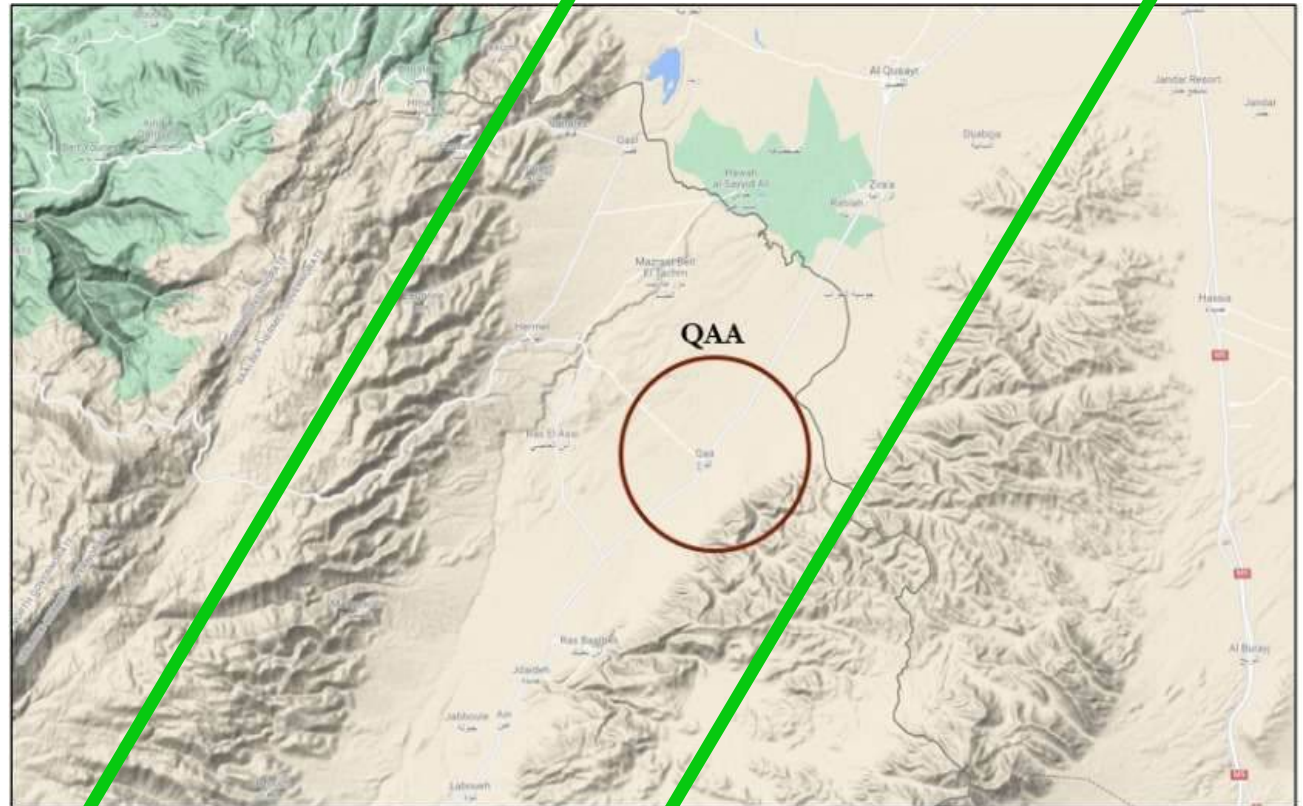
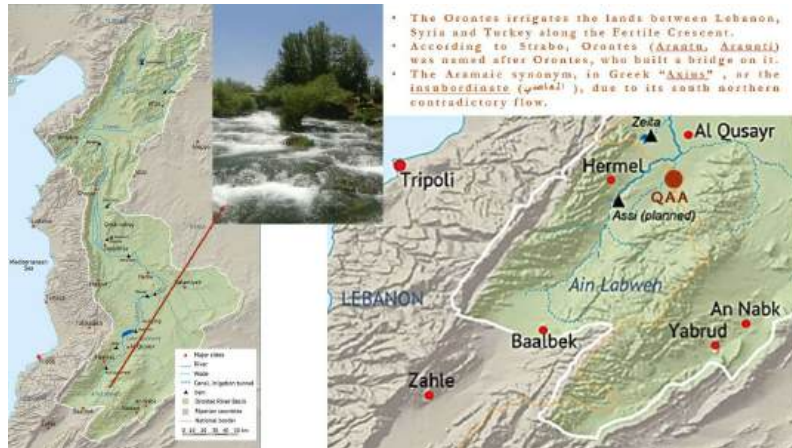
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## QAA CASE EARTHEN ARCHITECTURE



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## QAA CASE EARTHEN ARCHITECTURE

**constructive model that has  
been disappearing for decades**

**Adding local Contexte :**

- a civil war,
- military invasions,
- climate change with heavy weather fluctuations
- a depletion of natural resources,



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been disappearing for decades

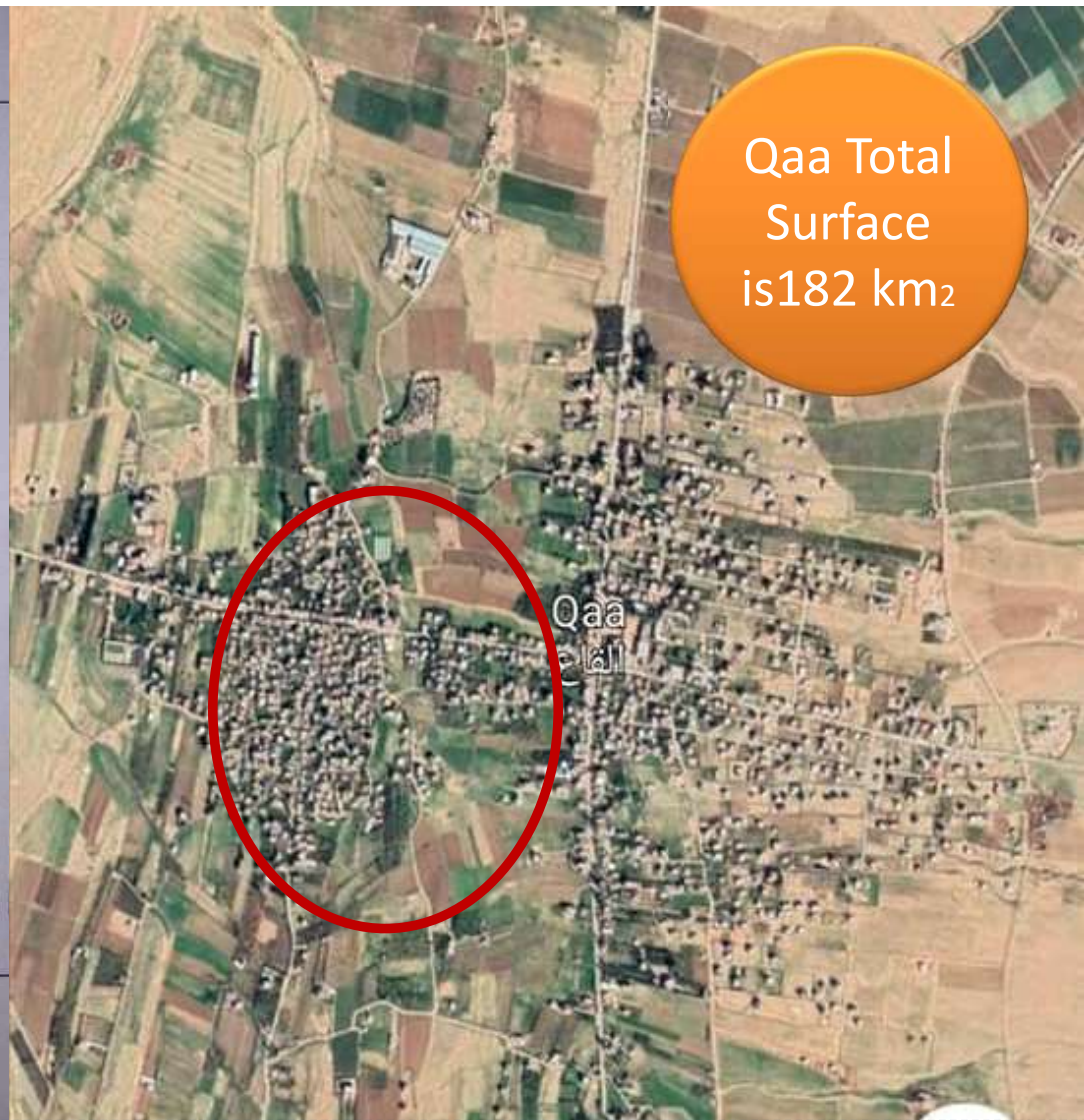
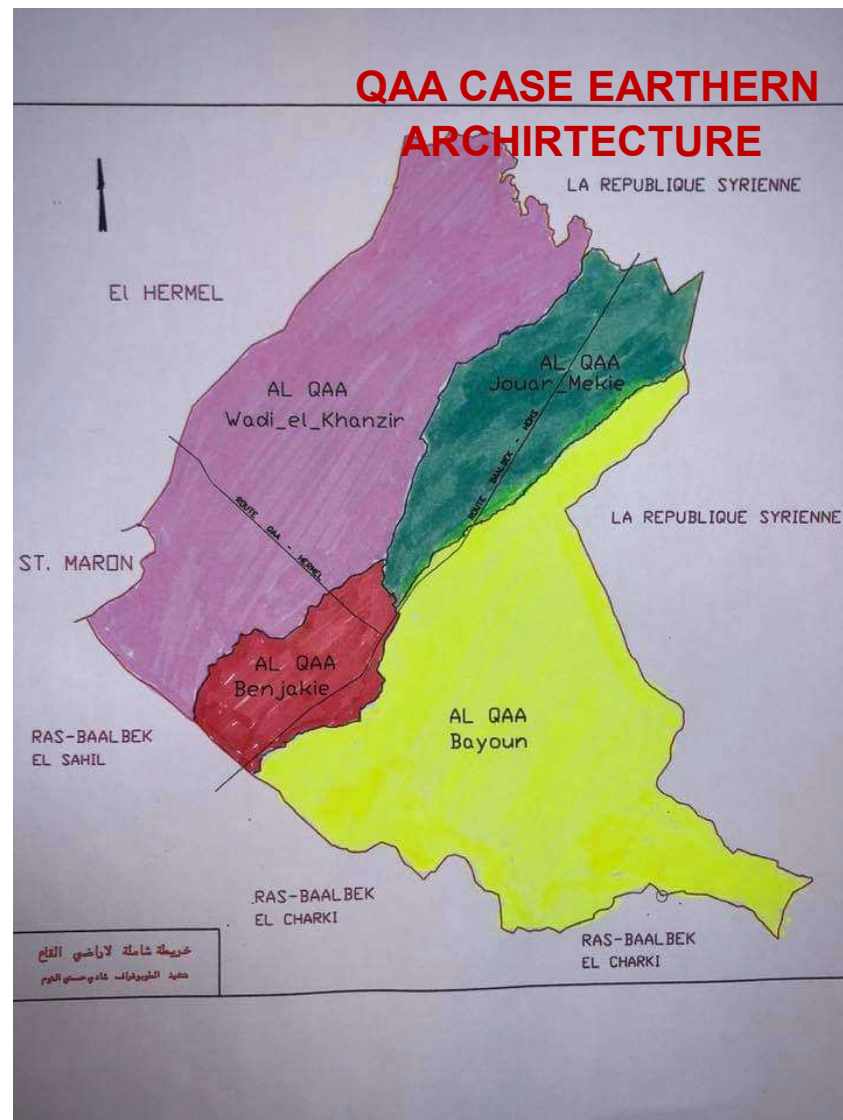
And

- rejection of models that require maintenance and that are considered indecent/uncomfortable



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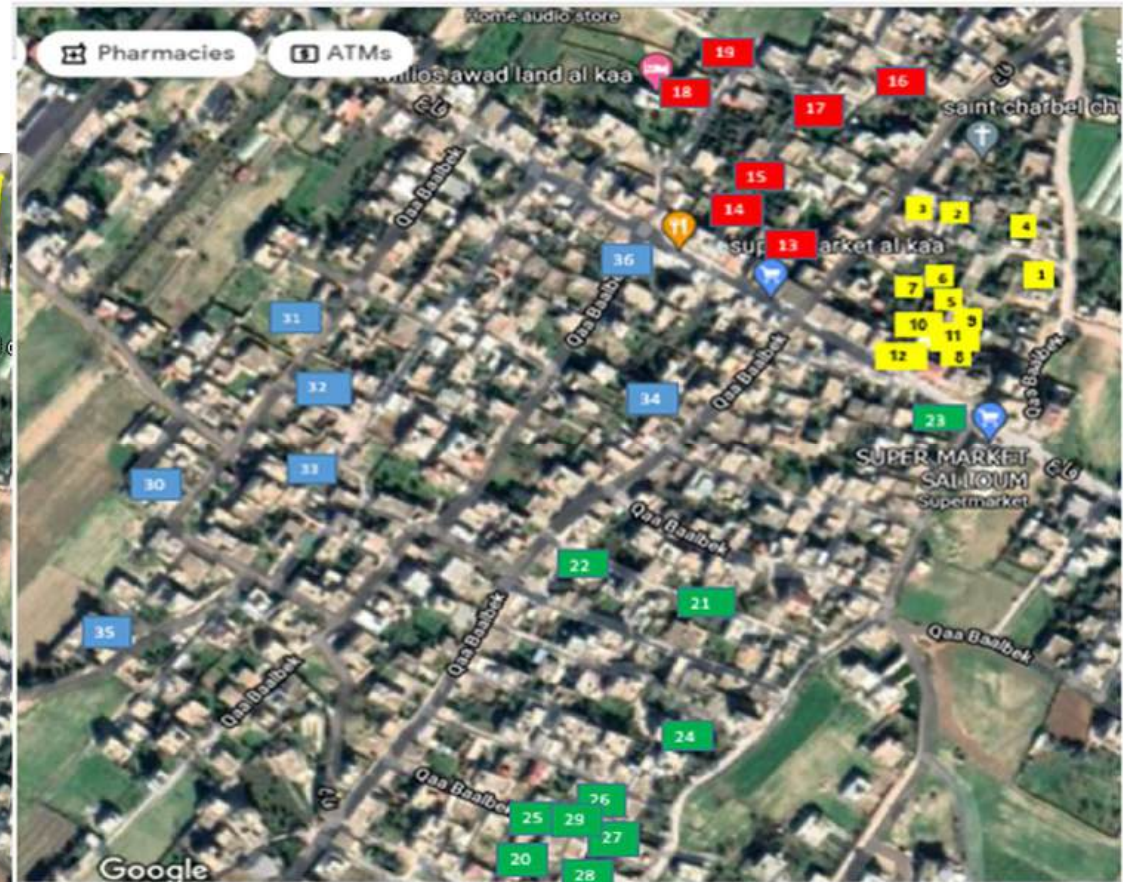


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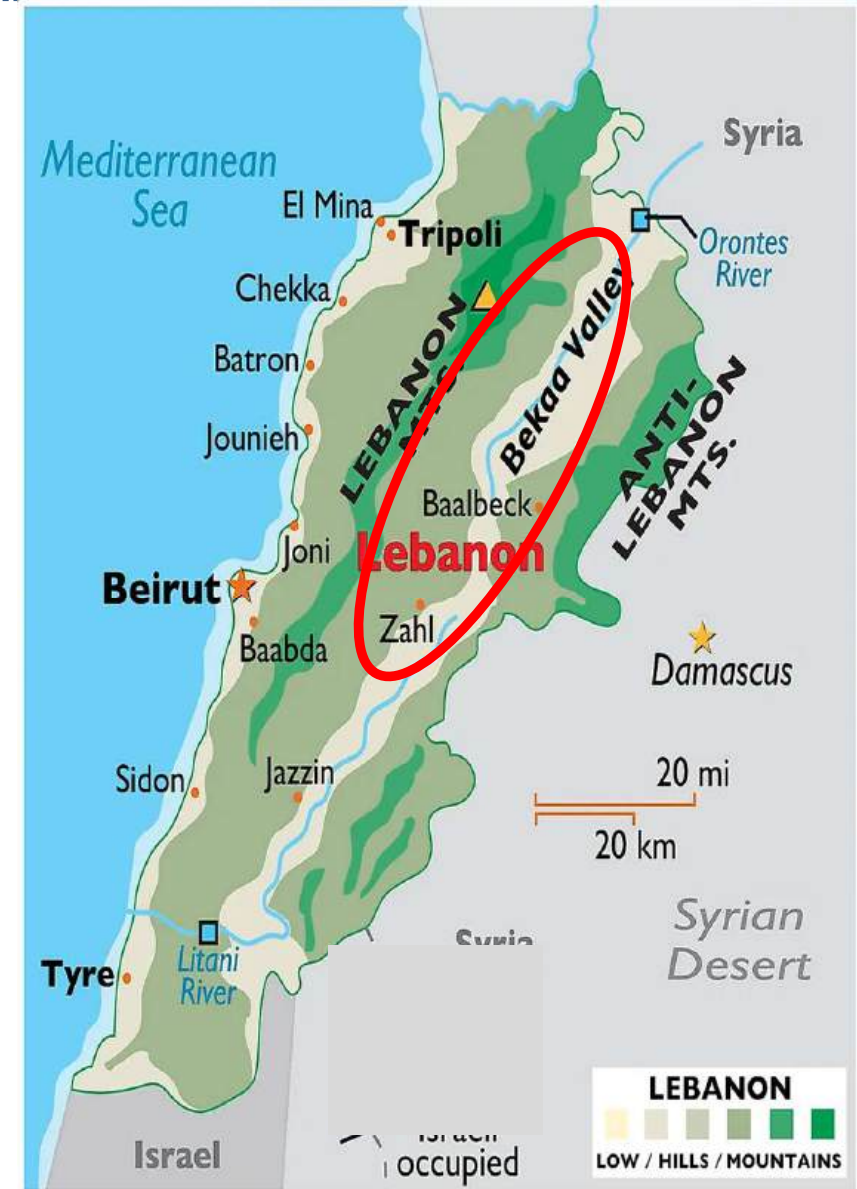
## QAA CASE EARTHEN ARCHITECTURE 34 sites



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# THREATS AND AWARENESS



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## QAA CASE EARTHEN ARCHITECTURE

### Awareness

The village of el-Qaa has entire quarters of intact mudbrick dwellings resulting in the emigration of 80% of its inhabitants - leaving centuries-old mudbrick buildings to decay



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## QAA CASE EARTHEN ARCHITECTURE

### Threats and Awareness

Raw earth construction using materials from the Bekaa, a local skill, is disappearing.

This construction style, similar to domed buildings, is a typical architectural style of northeastern Syria and the surrounding region.

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## QAA CASE EARTHEN ARCHITECTURE

### Threats and Awareness

These nostalgia-filled picturesque and historical houses build the urban fabric of this village.



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## QAA CASE EARTHEN ARCHITECTURE

### Threats and Awareness

It is therefore necessary to preserve a cultural heritage that is in danger.



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## QAA CASE EARTHEN ARCHITECTURE

### Threats and Awareness

it is  
A climate-resilient architectural  
Craft  
model ,  
culturally fragile  
endangered.



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## INITIATIVE



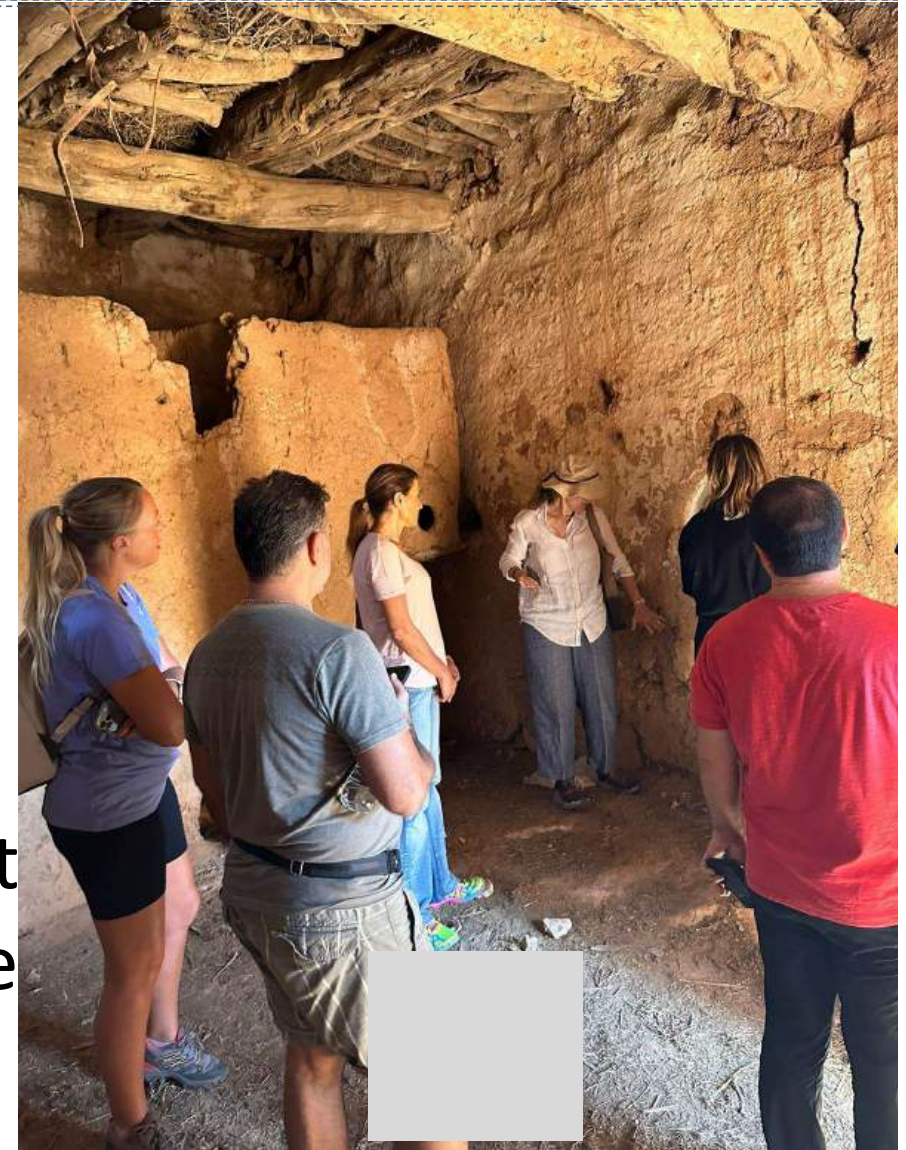
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### INITIATIVE

Subject matter  
experts, archaeologists,  
and architect restorers  
are involved  
in empowering locals to document  
protect and preserve their heritage



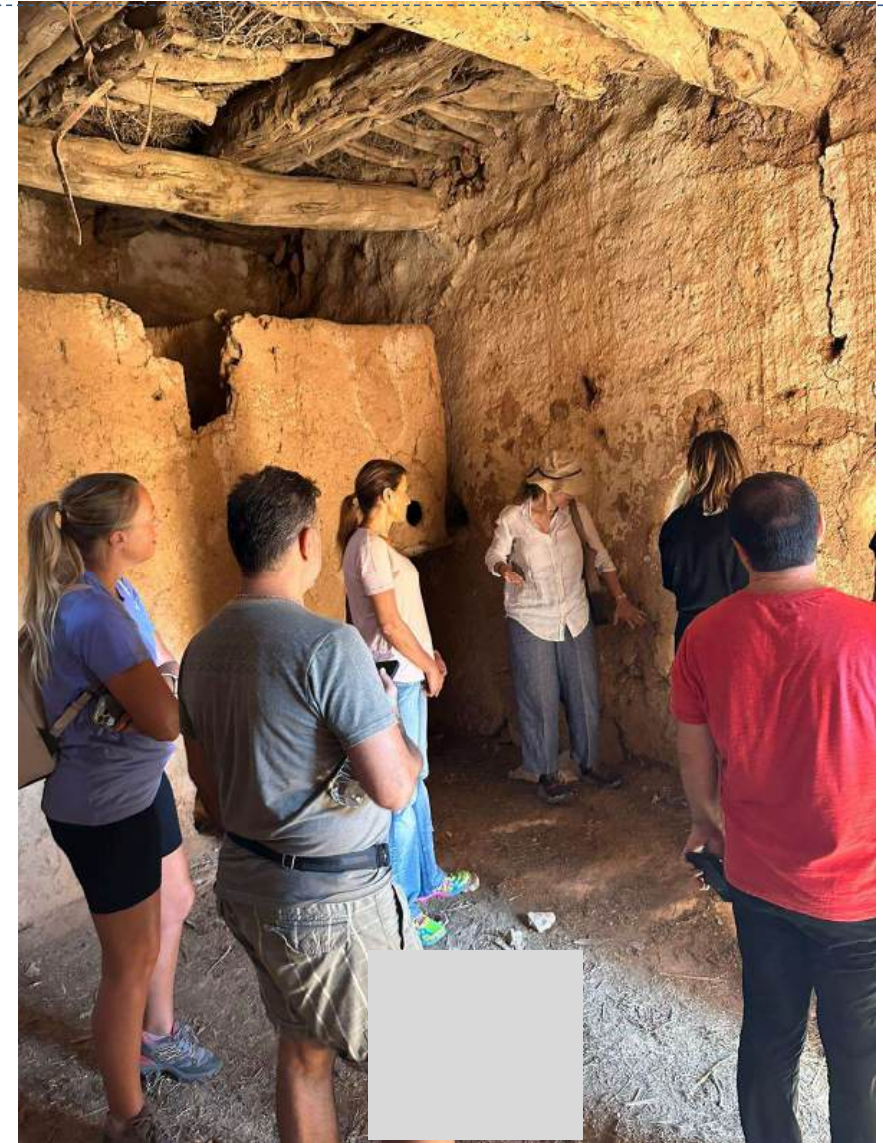
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**QAA CASE EARTHEN  
ARCHITECTURE**

**INITIATIVE**

**VIDEO**



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## QAA CASE EARTHEN ARCHITECTURE

### INITIATIVE

#### RISE OF QHRP

QHRP aims to revive the rural identity of el-Qaa by preserving its traditional heritage of vernacular mudbrick architecture targeting eco-tourism based economic opportunities.



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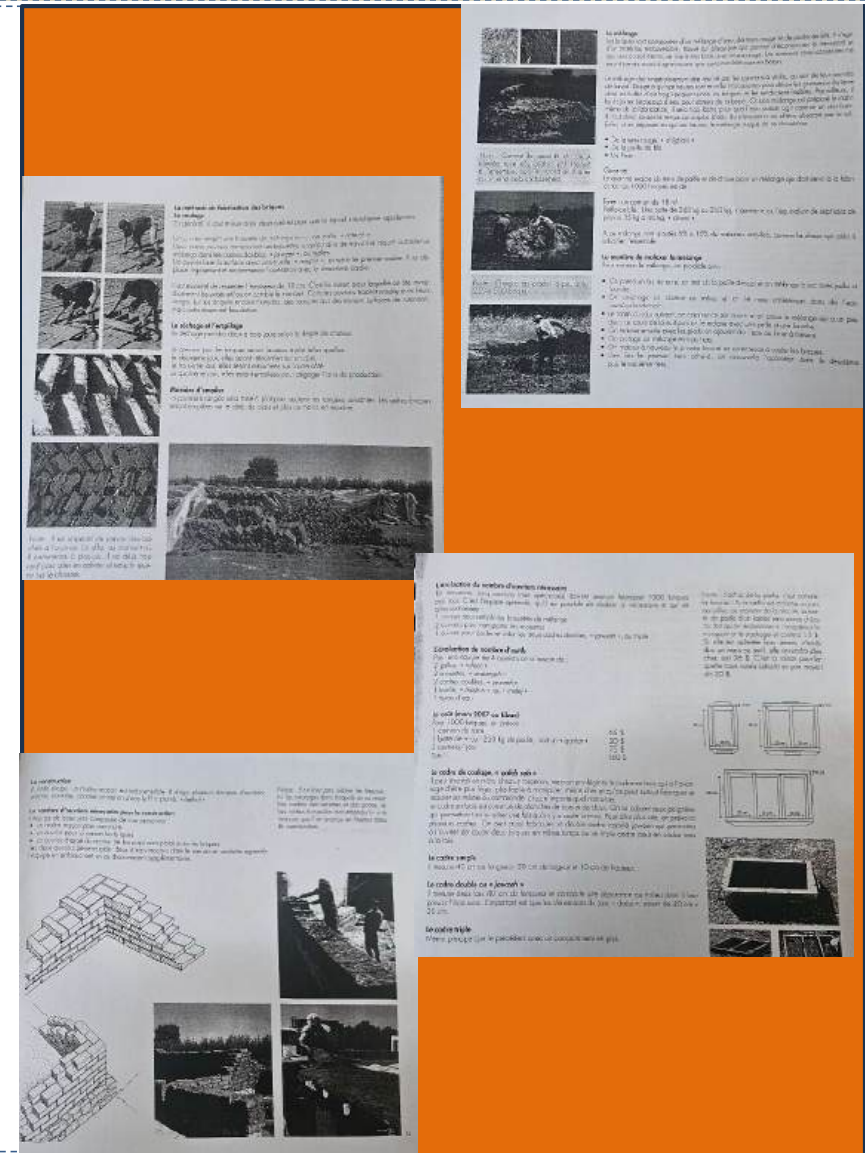
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# QAA CASE EARTHEN ARCHIRTECTURE

## CULTURAL AND DEVELOPMENT GOALS

A series of adobe craft training courses and workshops will be implemented , with the target to rehabilitate the urban fabrik and to introduce new durable, sustainable and climate change resilient methods of building techniques. \*



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## QAA CASE EARTHEN ARCHITECTURE

### CULTURAL AND DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Additionally,  
the project aims on the long term is  
to reverse the depopulation process  
by restoring the dwellings and  
turning the region into a tourism  
destination, training locals in  
rebuilding using traditional  
construction techniques.



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ARCHITECTURE



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## QAA CASE EARTHEN ARCHITECTURE



## Tannour



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## **TO GO FURTHER**

The use of raw earth in construction is currently experiencing a revival, stimulated by current environmental awareness.

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# POWER OF EARTH



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## QAA CASE EARTHEN ARCHITECTURE

### TO GO FURTHER

Indeed, it has real potential as a sustainable building material, provided that its application techniques are mastered and it is known how to judiciously combine it with other materials!  
In Lebanon and around



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## QAA CASE EARTHEN ARCHITECTURE

### TO GO FURTHER

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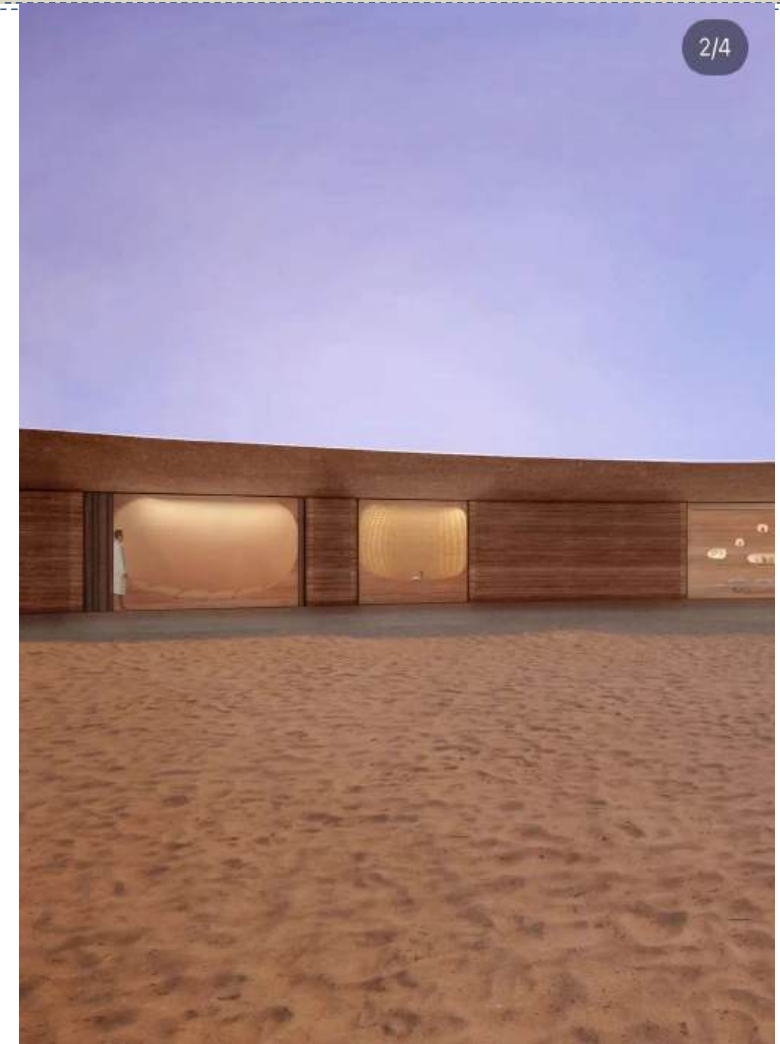




# SDG GOALS

## TO GO FURTHER

This ancestral method, adapted to modern requirements, demonstrates its effectiveness and its importance for the future of ecological construction.



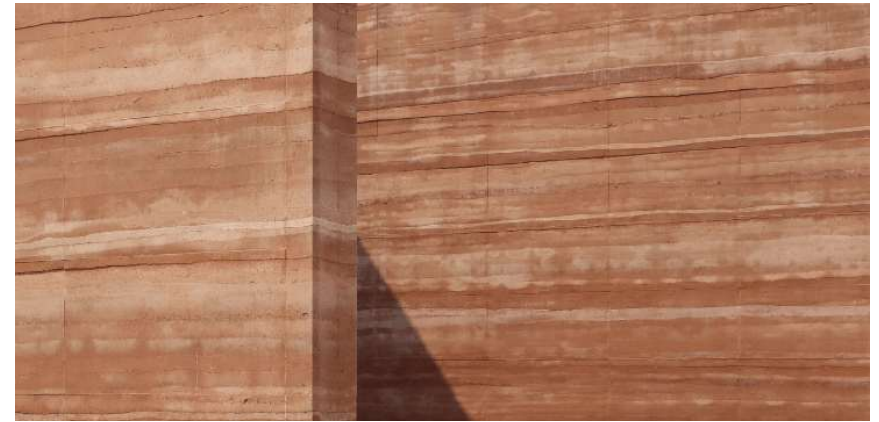
LINA GOTMEH ARCHITECTE AL ULA

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## TO GO FURTHER

How to Build a Sustainable Project

The Potential of Raw Earth in the  
Lebanese and regional Revival/  
reconstruction is georgious



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This presentation is a starter to collect ideas about how to engage this construction in the current technological context.

Proposals to establish a pedagogy and strategies to overcome the difficulties of building with raw earth in the Lebanese context and same local features areas .

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Building from the materials, earth and water, that we find in our immediat environnement .

Today, the **great growth** of populations and the **climate change** forces population to create new constructions that pose serious problems for development and sustainable building.

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Lebanon and the region are not exempt from these parameters.

We concede that the industrialization of materials has changed the way of life towards more consumption of manufactured products, which is detrimental to sustainable development and for sur for visual pollution.

In Lebanon, earthen architecture is not ubiquitous in most cities, it has been forgetton for many decades even in regions with harsh climates and high risk of natural disasters

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## **TO GO FURTHER**

### Advantages

#### Raw earth

is a raw, ecological material that remains unchanged by the manufacturing process, emphasizing its natural and healthy character.

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### TO GO FURTHER

#### Advantages

- sustainable architecture.
- The energy footprint of such buildings is minimized,
- fully recycled.
- creating a healthy habitat, offering excellent thermal inertia and natural humidity regulation.
- remarkable fire resistance,
- "It's like natural air conditioning":

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### TO GO FURTHER

#### Disadvantages

A raw earth construction requires the addition of an insulating material to protect against frost and moisture. It is economical as a raw material; its specific application requires rare expertise and is more time-consuming than conventional construction methods. This can increase the final project budget.

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Solutions have been questionable in several regions of the world.

Working to find advanced and effective technical solutions.

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## POWER OF CREATIVITY



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# POWER OF RULES

## TO GO FURTHER

## RECOMMANDATIONS

Despite its environmental benefits, raw earth construction is not yet widely adopted in the construction sector, partly due to the lack of specific **regulations governing** its use.

the use of raw earth in construction imposes limits on architectural creativity due to its numerous technical constraints, which can turn into significant challenges.

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**TO GO FURTHER**  
**RECOMMENDATIONS**

learning from the Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy, who understood and demonstrated that, on an architectural scale, one of the answers to these problems lies in leveraging local resources. He mobilized available cognitive and pragmatic resources: local knowledge and know-how.\* village of New Gournna, on the west bank of the Nile, in Luxor.

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# POWER OF TECHNOLOGIE

## TO GO FURTHER RECOMMANDATIONS

**Regulated technical production sectors**  
and scientific analysis offices are to be developed on a human scale with the ambition of being a catalyst for environmental, energy, and societal transitions, as well as for changing behaviors in local construction.

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By reintroducing know-how and integrating reflections

**combining know-how and new technologies,**  
as well as training local people,

**Basing on**  
**new desing regarding the material**  
**EQUITY new concepts funds building capacity**

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we can equitably find solutions to maintain  
populations in their natural and social  
environment and support them by creating  
sectors that ensure  
sustainability,  
ecology,  
hygiene,  
and technical and technological performance.

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THANK YOU  
MERCI POUR VOTRE ECOUTE .

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