

# SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PARTNERSHIP WITH LOCAL FARMERS STRENGTHENS FAMILY INCOMES

ILC'S DATABASE OF GOOD PRACTICES

## LEARN, SHARE AND BE INSPIRED!

Country: **Jordan** - Principal Organisation: **DQLCC**

### ABSTRACT

In Tafilah in southern Jordan, the Dana and Qadisiyah Local Community Cooperative (DQLCC) has set up a sustainable tourism partnership with a group of local farmers by establishing a small camp for tourists on the edge of a nature reserve. Since the local community has limited rights of access to its land and no rights of use, management, or alienation, DQLCC is working to strengthen the livelihoods of community members. The Wadi Dana tourist camp, which is working towards eco status, is operated by local people and volunteers, and provides community

members with employment and work experience opportunities. A small team provides "hotel services" for guests staying in tents and chalets: food is prepared by a female home cook, and guests are offered traditional "village life experiences" and guided hikes, led by shepherds (mainly youths) and farmers. Eco-tourism is strengthening community livelihoods, promoting a traditional lifestyle, providing an alternative to migration, and promoting improved land and ecosystem management.

### ILC COMMITMENTS



**SECURE  
TENURE RIGHTS**



**STRONG SMALL-SCALE  
FARMING SYSTEMS**



**EFFECTIVE ACTIONS AGAINST  
LAND GRABBING**

# COMPETENCIES

## AREAS

2

**COMMUNITIES,  
INDIGENOUS AND  
RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS,  
AND RIGHTS**  
**RURAL LAND GOVERNANCE**  
**YOUTH**  
**PROTECTION OF  
HUMAN RIGHTS**  
**CLIMATE CHANGE AND  
NATURAL DISASTERS**

## SKILLS

**USE OF MEDIA AND  
COMMUNICATION**  
**ESTABLISHMENT AND  
STRENGTHENING OF  
LOCAL INSTITUTIONS**  
**RESEARCH AND  
TRAINING**

## BACKGROUND

DQLCC was set up by the local community in 1994 in response to a ruling by the Jordanian government that the community's customary land should be turned into a nature reserve. Since then, local people have had limited rights of access to their land and no

rights of use, management, or alienation. The lack of opportunities in the area has led to the abandonment of traditional activities and migration to urban areas, where there are better employment opportunities.

## THE CHALLENGE

The communities in Dana and Qadisiyah have lost their customary land due to the establishment of the nature reserve. The communities are plagued with challenges that include a lack of income opportunities; a reduction in available pastureland and in opportunities for customary income-generating activities such as wood collecting and hunting; droughts caused by climate

change; local unemployment; and lack of education and training.

The reserve is managed by an NGO that has an international reputation as a protector of nature. However, its management of the reserve excludes the local community and ignores their traditional land rights and practices.





## OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGE

DQLCC set up a sustainable tourism partnership with a group of local farmers by establishing a small camp for tourists at the edge of the nature reserve. The camp is operated by local people and volunteers and is working towards acquiring eco status; in particular, it provides employment and work experience opportunities for women and youth. A small team provides “hotel services” to tourists, who stay in tents or chalets: food is prepared by a female home cook, and guests are offered traditional “village life experiences” and guided hikes led by young shepherds and farmers, who have been trained to international standards in mountain guiding. Guests can also join the farmers and shepherds in their daily work. The guiding work provides an alternative income for shepherds and farmers, and reduces the number of livestock grazing on pastures.

## MOVING TOWARDS PEOPLE-CENTRED LAND GOVERNANCE

The camp opened for business in 2014. Since then, local people have built a strong, positive presence in tourism within the nature reserve. DQLCC provides tourists with quality local tourism alternatives to camping and hiking facilities operated by the reserve management. The land used for its camp is better utilised than before, as it has provided the local community with alternative sources of income. Furthermore, the surrounding pasturelands are better managed because local communities have reduced the size of their livestock herds.

The camp has boosted the status and incomes of farmers and shepherds, created employment for women and youth, and provided an alternative income stream for many families. Most importantly, the partnership has enabled the protection of traditional knowledge and practices, including food, farming, shepherding, and the collection and use of herbs. This knowledge is being transferred to, and practised by, the younger generation and by tourist visitors, including those on youth exchanges within Jordan and internationally.

# THE GOOD PRACTICE IN FIVE SIMPLE STEPS

1

**Creation of a Joint Management Board:** The cooperative and local farmers used democratic means to create a joint management group to oversee the day-to-day business of the camp. The participatory approach used to create the Board has empowered the community to manage the camp effectively, based on their own traditions and priorities. Community members also participate in planning and implementing economic activities at the camp, under the guidance of the Board.

2

**Capacity building:** The eco-tourism capacity of local communities has been enhanced by the capacity-building activities of DQLCC. Members of the local community have gained capacity to meet the camp's needs and priorities, including in hotel services, customer care, language training, and training on tour guide services. The main tools used have been training workshops, computer programs, and experiential exchanges with volunteers, visitors, and tourists. Women, youth, and elders are priority stakeholders and capacity-building activities are tailored to their specific needs.

3

**Exchange tourism:** DQLCC uses experiential exchange as a means of promoting the traditional knowledge and culture of the local communities in Dana and Qadisiyah. The communities have an opportunity to showcase their traditions and culture to Jordanian and international tourists. By showcasing their crafts, food, and traditional lifestyles, local communities gain confidence in their identity. These exchanges are bi-directional, with tourists and visitors sharing knowledge of the English language, information and communication technology (ICT), and scientific management of natural resources.

4

**Traditional economic activities:** All activities at the eco-camp are aimed at providing sustainable livelihoods for the local community and promoting their traditional culture and lifestyle, which are environmentally friendly. With local traditions facing the threat of eradication, promoting traditional economic activities helps prevent the loss of local culture, by reinforcing and enhancing it.

5

**Sustainable management of the eco-camp:** Professional management of the Wadi Dana eco-camp ensures its sustainability. DQLCC and the Joint Management Board have created a user satisfaction questionnaire and a referrals list to track feedback from tourists and to target marketing. They have also strengthened their book-keeping and reporting systems to improve financial accountability to the local communities.

DQLCC has invested in local community members, supporting women to strengthen their crafts, cooking, and camp management skills in order to cater for diverse and international tourist groups. Community elders are an important knowledge resource for the community and set a dignified example to youth. Their role includes teaching young people about local culture and traditions, instilling a sense of confidence in their traditional identity, and preventing the migration of youth to urban centres.





## 3 THREE FACTORS OF SUCCESS AND REPLICABILITY

1

**Engagement of all stakeholders:** The local community was ready to cooperate with DQLCC because people had a sense of community ownership of the project. DQLCC included all community members and prioritised the inclusion of accepted traditional roles in all camp activities. It also sought to showcase and preserve the tradition and culture of the local communities.

2

**Capacity building:** DQLCC conducted trainings for local people in order to enhance their customer service and camp management skills. Since tourists generally use English, DQLCC also provides English language lessons to local people to enable them to communicate with them. Community members are also trained on the use of ICT.

3

**Enhancing economic opportunities:** Local communities are provided with economic opportunities that attract and motivate them to continue their involvement with the camp. Local communities, particularly women and young herders, have been provided with income opportunities based on eco-friendly local traditions and culture that have enhanced their family incomes and livelihoods.

## LESSONS LEARNED

1. Language: Arabic is the local language in Jordan, but English is used in the tourism sector. Local communities have been taught a functional level of English through experiential exchanges and online language classes.

2. Meeting international tourism standards: DQLCC and the Joint Management Board have worked with local communities to adapt to internationally accepted tourism standards. This has included courses on hygiene

standards for food, catering services, and accommodation.

3. Limited financial resources: The communities in Dana and Qadisiyah have prioritised sharing and collective community growth, and all resources are shared amongst community members. DQLCC also makes use of volunteers and in-kind community contributions.

4. Information and communication technology: Due to the communities' geographic location,

internet access and technology are limited. However, DQLCC has provided them with internet and International Computer Driver's Licence (ICDL) courses to enhance their ICT skills, and has expanded the camp's online presence with online marketing and bookings. Local people are trained on safe internet use, and are able to take online language courses or to learn about handicrafts online.

## FIND OUT MORE

Wadi Dana Eco-camp, Dana Nature Reserve, Tafila, Jordan. <https://www.facebook.com/WadiDana/>