

Local communities focus group – Anfeh



Six local guesthouse and restaurant owners attended TExTOUR's focus group in Anfeh to talk about sustainable tourism, business strategy, heritage valorisation and tourism data collection and exploitation.

TExTOUR's first focus group on **sustainable cultural tourism** in [Anfeh](#), Lebanon, took place on the 26th of November 2021 at Marsē guesthouse. The discussion group was moderated by Nizar Hariri and Maria Mounzer from [GAIA- heritage](#) and was attended by 6 local guesthouse and restaurant owners.

The event aimed to **involve local guesthouse and restaurant owners** in TExTOUR project and to understand how to use data provided by these people the best possible way.



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“Anfeh is similar to diamonds in Africa, no one knows its value until it reaches London.”

Focus group participants showed a strong emotional connection with their land, a unique village built between the sea and the countryside. They defined Anfeh as a “rare rural area on the Lebanese sea shore”.

But it isn't all sunshine and rainbows: because of the last two decades **economic growth**, today Anfeh population is divided in two fractions. Those who benefited from tourism and those who didn't. The massive influx of visitors is altering Anfeh's equilibrium and people are less welcoming and more jealous of each other.

Anfeh has a great potential for cultural tourism. Anfeh has several monuments and historical sites, such as [Ras El Qalaa](#) fort, and it is also the keeper of old traditions, ancient crafts, fishermen's tales and fascinating legends. The local entrepreneurs pointed out how such heritage is not fully valued because of the lack of proper infrastructure, touristic guides and organisations.

“The authenticity, reality and simplicity of Anfeh makes it a destination for Europeans”

The great part of the tourist flow is made by **European tourists**, mainly French and Italian. They appreciate Anfeh for being different from the usual European villages, for its unique landscape, friendly people and good food, such as the typical pickled sardines or the candied figs.

On the other hand, **Arab tourists** only represents 2 to 4% of the total tourist flow but still are the major source of income for Anfeh business owners. Arabic tourists spend more on food and goods than European ones and tip generously.

Anfeh local tourism entrepreneurs lack a business strategy to target specific tourist categories, such as the European ones. However, European tourists are the key to ensure **business continuity and sustainability** of villages like Anfeh.

This first focus group was a success: it has shown a great interest from the local guesthouse and restaurant owners in TExTOUR project and its outcomes. There is a strong connection between these entrepreneurs and the local community and they have a clear picture of **how they want tourism in Anfeh to develop**. TExTOUR' strategy and cultural indicator can be used as a roadmap for future cultural tourism projects and funding in Anfeh.

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