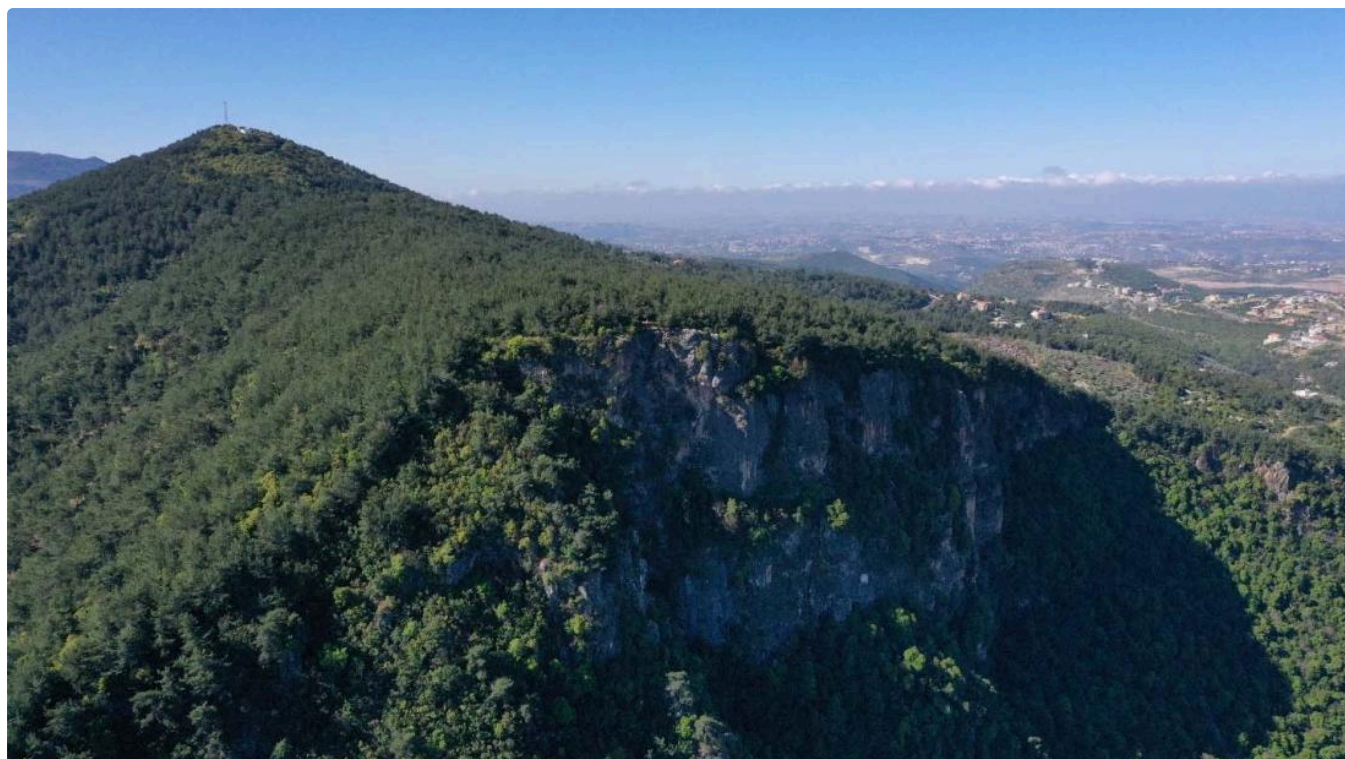


Azour — press pack

September 2026



The Shir cliff above Azour: the programme's main site. Photo: REFLEY.

In brief

Work has started in Azour, in the Jezzine district of South Lebanon. The hiking trails have been mapped out, the tender for the works is open, a visitor kiosk is planned, and training for young local guides is beginning.

This is part of a French-Lebanese decentralised cooperation programme. The Azour strand is run with the town of **Villepreux**, in the Yvelines department, and the French-Lebanese association REFLEY (formerly Libanais en Yvelines); a second strand, between Jouy-en-Josas and Jeita, follows the same specification. The Azour budget stands **between €30,000 and €50,000** over 2026-2027.

Maria Maroun, a Lebanese expert, has been appointed on the ground to follow the works and produce the reports shared with the French partners. Monitoring runs through a shared application, and a website is being built to present the village, its trails and its restored sites, with GPS tracks.

The setting: work between villages

The CEM programme — French for “turnkey project” — is not aid sent from afar. It is work carried out **between villages**, each with its municipality, its association and its residents — two in Lebanon, two in the French department of Yvelines.

This pack covers the **Azour strand**, run with the town of **Villepreux** and the **French-Lebanese association REFLEY (formerly Libanais en Yvelines)**, born of the diaspora, which has coordinated the **Villepreux-Azour partnership since 2023**. A second strand, between **Jouy-en-Josas** and **Jeita**, follows the same specification. Overall coordination rests with **YCID** (Yvelines International Cooperation and Development), supported by the **Yvelines Department** and the **French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs**.

In Azour the programme funds three connected areas of work, for a budget **between €30,000 and €50,000** over 2026-2027:

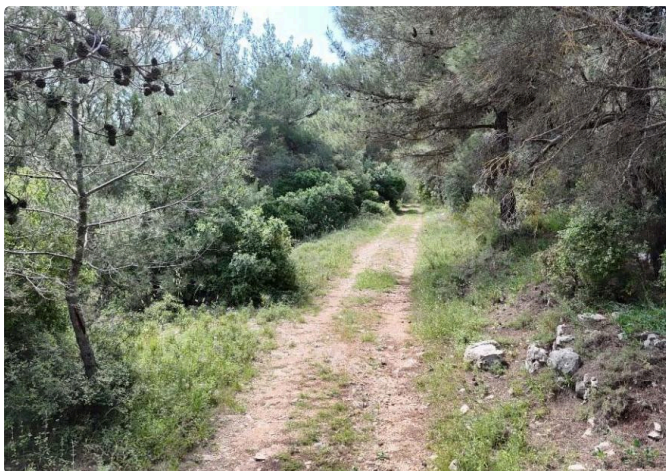
1. **Restoring and enhancing natural heritage** — trails, natural sites, signage, visitor facilities.
2. **Environmental education for young people**, through exchanges between Azour, Jeita and Yvelines.
3. **Strengthening the village's tourism appeal** and promoting outdoor sports.

The figures include in-kind contributions from the partners — staff time, premises, volunteering — valued and counted alongside cash. Every item of spending is tied to an action, a year and a funder.

Work has started in Azour

The ground has been surveyed and the trails mapped. Work began with a field survey and design models, carried out with specialists who know the region. The routes are now settled: the main **Shir** site, the **Shir el Joub path** towards Beba and Bteddine El Lockh, and an extension towards the **Bisri valley**.

The tender is open. The works — making the trails passable and safe, waymarking, clearing, rest areas, information panels — are out to competition. The first sites open as soon as contracts are awarded.



The Shir el Joub path through the pines: making it passable, waymarking it and making it safe are all part of the tender. Photo: REFLEY.



A route in spring: without regular upkeep, the vegetation takes the trail back. Photo: REFLEY.

A visitor kiosk is planned, along with the *El Abo — Le Cave* campsite at Bteddine El Lockh: paths, sanitary facilities, a water point. The village is acquiring what a visitor needs in order to stay more than an hour.

Training for young Lebanese guides is starting, and will run over two years. A village that welcomes walkers needs local people able to guide them — and that income stays in the village.

What comes next

When	What happens in Azour
By end 2026	Works on the Shir site, the Shir el Joub path and the Bisri valley extension; campsite at Bteddine El Lockh; information panels and outreach equipment; first guide training session; first edition of the annual Azour trail race ; ceremony and inaugural walk on the restored path
In 2027	Second guide training session; consolidation of the hiking offer (mapping, topography, support to local tourist offices); second Azour trail race; Lebanese delegation at the Villepreux trail
Across both years	Youth exchanges; three sessions hosting groups from Jeita in Azour, and three trips by young people from Azour to Jeita

The programme is **on schedule across all its commitments**.

How the project is run, and checked

Lebanese expertise, selected by tender

The programme relies on **local experts who know the region** — its terrain, its paths, its seasons — and on **Lebanese firms based in the area**, used to working there. The choice is not merely practical: it means the programme's money is spent locally and the know-how stays there.

Contracts are awarded through **rigorous tenders**: precisely defined works, several firms consulted, quotes compared. No quote becomes a commitment until **every partner has approved it** — the municipality of Azour, the town of Villepreux and the association. No one commits money alone.

An expert on the ground, reporting back to France

Maria Maroun, a Lebanese expert, has been appointed to follow the project in the field: verifying progress, gathering supporting documents, and producing the reports shared with the French partners. She is from the country and present in the village — not a short mission flown in from Paris.

Monitoring with tools, not declarations

Monitoring runs through an **application shared by partners in both countries**, where the process is formalised end to end: every task has an owner and a deadline; every quote, invoice or receipt is attached to the spending it justifies; every approval leaves a dated, named trace. Before, during and after photographs are filed from a phone, on site.

Reports to funders are produced from that data, with no re-keying. At any moment it is clear what is planned, what is committed and what has been paid — item by item. For a Lebanese municipality, being able to show where every euro went is proof of seriousness that counts towards the next round of funding.

A website to accompany the trails

A dedicated site is being built alongside the project. It will present the village, its hiking routes and the restored sites, and guide those who come to walk: **GPS tracks**, distances, difficulty, points of interest and water, places to stay and eat.

It is the natural extension of the works: restoring a trail is pointless if no one knows it exists, or how to follow it. The site addresses visitors — Lebanese city dwellers, diaspora families, hikers — as much as residents, for whom the village becomes an address they can show.

Why this programme matters

In Lebanon: staying in the village, and making a living there

The crisis is pushing families towards the cities and young people abroad. A village that loses its young people loses its schools, then its shops, then its municipality.



Azour in its valley, facing the snow-capped peaks: the natural heritage the programme sets out to make walkable. Photo: REFLEY.

The programme tackles this from the only angle available at village scale: **giving value to what is already there**. A restored trail, a maintained natural site, signage, visibility — and the village becomes a destination. A destination sustains guesthouses, restaurants, farmers, guides and craftspeople. These are jobs that cannot be relocated.

The works themselves employ local firms, selected by tender. The programme's money is spent on the ground.

Young people are a direct target: reciprocal visits and outdoor-sport activities are aimed at youth in both countries, so that the village is somewhere things happen rather than somewhere you leave.

Finally, the municipalities gain **management capacity**: running a project, awarding a contract, justifying a payment, accounting for it. That is what will let them seek other funding tomorrow.

In France: a diaspora that builds, territories that talk to each other

Yvelines has a long-established, active Lebanese community. The programme offers it something other than a money transfer home: **a collective project, run with a French town**, where the diaspora contributes its knowledge of the Lebanese ground and its networks.

For Villepreux, this is cooperation beyond symbolic twinning: one municipal council working with another on real works and a shared budget. Young people from both countries meet.

The trail race, on both shores

The **annual Azour trail race** is run on the very paths the programme is restoring: it makes the routes known, fills the village's tables and rooms, and puts a date in the local calendar. Two editions are funded, in 2026 and 2027.

At the same period **Villepreux holds its own trail race** — and in 2027 a **Lebanese delegation will take part**. Two villages, two races, the same runners crossing over: the simplest and most visible form this twinning takes.

A mobile clinic leaves for Jezzine

On **18 September 2026** a mobile clinic leaves Villepreux for the Jezzine district. The departure ceremony is held at 5 p.m. on the town hall forecourt, place Pierre-Mendès-France, with the Embassy of Lebanon in France attending. The vehicle is loaded at Le Havre in late September or early October, then travels some 3,000 km by ro-ro vessel to Beirut and on to the hills of Jezzine.

It is a van fitted out as a medical unit: insulation and air conditioning, independent power supply, cold chain, tail lift and side awning for receiving patients in the village. It will serve **nine localities in the district** — Azour, Taid, Sabah, Midan, Bteddine el-Lokch, Bisri, Mazraat el-Matha, El-Harf and Machmouche — around **6,000 inhabitants**, with a target of **2,500 consultations a year**. Extension to all sixteen villages of the district is envisaged for 2027.

The project is run by **REFLEY** with the **Town of Villepreux** and the **Municipality of Azour**, alongside **Hôtel-Dieu de France** (medical supervision, care protocols and staff training) and the **Azoury Clinic** in Jezzine. Missions Solidarité Liban funded part of the vehicle purchase. Initial investment is around **€78,000**; running costs, of the order of €22,800 a year, will be met on the Lebanese side, with full autonomy assured by the Municipality of Azour from **2028**.

€10,000 still has to be raised for shipping and customs: without it the vehicle cannot be loaded. Donations at **refley.fr/don**.

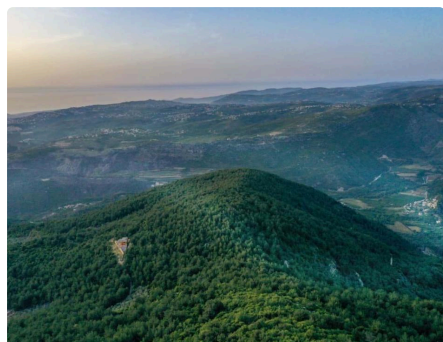
The logic matches that of the trails in Azour: **bring the service to where people live**, rather than wait for people to travel down to the city. The nine villages depend on Jezzine Governmental Hospital, but the isolated ones have no regular access to care: early detection of chronic illness is lacking and older residents give up on the journey.

Not to be confused. The mobile clinic is **not** funded by Clé en main. It is an initiative of the decentralised cooperation partnership between Villepreux and Azour. Clé en main is a separate programme, which supports that partnership and also covers other localities. The two meet on the ground — same villages, same partners — never in the budget.

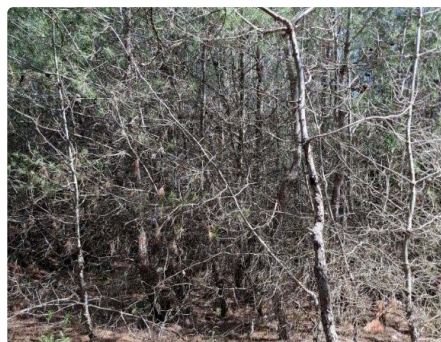
Quick facts

Village	Azour, Jezzine district, South Lebanon
Strand partners	Municipality of Azour, town of Villepreux (Yvelines), REFLEY (formerly Libanais en Yvelines)
Strand budget	Between €30,000 and €50,000 over 2026-2027
Coordination	YCID — Yvelines International Cooperation and Development
Support	Yvelines Department, French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs
Second strand	Jouy-en-Josas · Jeita
On-the-ground monitoring	Maria Maroun, Lebanese expert appointed; reports shared with France
Current stage	Trails mapped, tender open, first works imminent
Sites being restored	Shir site, Shir el Joub path towards Beba and Bteddine El Lockh, Bisri valley extension, campsite at Bteddine El Lockh
Dates to watch	Annual Azour trail race (2026 and 2027), ceremony and inaugural walk

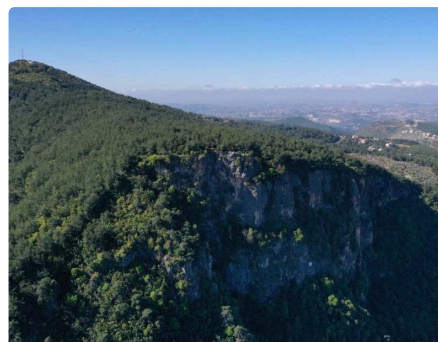
Photographs available



azour-collines-coucher-de-soleil.jpg



azour-sous-bois-de-pins.jpg



azour-falaise-vue-aerienne.jpg

The six photographs in this pack can be downloaded at full resolution from refley.fr/presse, along with the pack in all three languages. They may be reproduced freely in an article about the programme, credited “**Photo: REFLEY**”. Any other use requires the association's agreement. Further material — trail mapping, mobile clinic — is available from the press contact.

Press contact: asso@refley.fr · +33 7 66 36 01 20 · refley.fr

Jihad Bou Karam, lead for the mobile clinic project