



Nizar Hani

CHOUF REGION, LEBANON

**Middle East Exchange Program,
New England, 2004**

**Middle East Program Regional Meeting, Turkey,
2008**

**Middle East Program Regional Meeting, Oman,
2012**

Nizar is the Manager of the Shouf Biosphere Reserve, renowned for the Cedars of Lebanon. Al-Shouf is one of 15 nature reserves in Lebanon



Nizar Hani, Middle East Exchange Program, 2004
PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF NIZAR HANI

From Village Local to Park Manager ~

Protected Areas Management and community engagement define Nizar Hani's profession. Nizar is from Baadaran, an agricultural village now within the Shouf Biosphere Reserve, a UNESCO designated biosphere reserve composed of the Al-Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve, Ammiq Wetland, and twenty-four surrounding villages. As Manager of the Reserve, Nizar holds an intrinsic commitment to the stewardship of cultural and natural heritage.

The focus of Nizar's current work is holistic ecosystem management, which includes civic engagement and local community involvement to protect nature and improve integrated ecosystem services such as sustainable agriculture and forest fire prevention through biomass management. As Lebanon's population continues to grow, Nizar works to manage ecosystems threatened by climate change, tourism, and urbanization in a sustainable manner. With this in mind, Nizar also values natural resource management working with local communities in the stewardship of the Reserve, both in principle and for the practical economic benefit of the community.

Community Engagement and Beyond ~

In 2004, Nizar traveled to New England to take part in QLF's Middle East Exchange Program. During the exchange, he explored ways to manage protected areas and establish partnerships with local communities. "It was my first time going to the U.S., and it was a very useful experience. We now establish links between managing protected areas and local communities, and finding more income for the families living near the park." Nizar and his colleagues have developed several projects that promote sustainable tourism throughout Lebanon, helping local families convert their homes into guesthouses.



QLF Alumni, Middle East Program Regional Meeting, Kas Turkey, 2008

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF QLF ARCHIVES

As well Nizar works on sustainable agriculture projects as a means of both making the Reserve economically beneficial to the local community and reviving the largely abandoned cultural heritage of terrace cultivation in the Mount Lebanon region. “These activities link the people with the park, and now they understand the benefits. We are trying to build the capacity for local actors, and to restore our ecosystems in a practical way to enhance agriculture and to prepare for climate change impact.” Nizar is also creating resilient biological corridors to protect migrating species and restore ecosystems.

In August 2020, Nizar was awarded the prestigious *Kenton R. Miller Award* for Innovation in National Parks and Protected Area Sustainability from the International Union for the Conservation for Nature (IUCN). Nizar's conservation leadership in the Biosphere Reserve in Lebanon serves as the model for restoration of nature, community development, climate change resilience, sustainable economic development, and the facilitation of peaceful reconciliation worldwide.

“I have learned a lot over the years, all beginning with the exchange with QLF.” For Nizar, QLF represents more than just an organization, but a shared feeling among all those who have participated in QLF activities. Like many other QLF Alumni, Nizar has a deep inner conviction of the importance of conservation working with local communities. “When we start to have a vision, we can make a change, even if it’s in just one region. This is part of my life and my passion.”



The view from the Shouf Biosphere Reserve, a UNESCO designated Biosphere Reserve in Lebanon

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF NIZAR HANI