

WEEKLY REPORT

APRIL 13- APRIL 20, 2007

Lebanon Rapid Post-Conflict Recovery Program

Welcome to Mercy Corps Lebanon's weekly progress report activities implemented in southern Lebanon, Borj el Barajneh, and the Bekaa Valley. Please direct any questions or content suggestions to Sarah Kouzi: skouzi@lb.mercycorps.org or Yara Sfeir yrsfeir@lb.mercycorps.org



Students eager to answer questions at a “Get to Know Lebanon” event in Baalbek

Mercy Corps implements programs in the following sectors:

- I. Protection**
- II. Logistics and Relief Commodities**
- III. Food Security & Agriculture**
- IV. Water Sanitation and Hygiene**
- V. Nutrition**

I. PROTECTION



School repair in Nabatiye

Mercy Corps has finalized rehabilitating 27 public schools in Nabatiye caza as part of Phase II repairs. Mercy Corps handed over 23 of these schools to the community. The remaining four will be handed over next week, weather permitting. Phase II repairs benefit 7,708 public school children. The total number of beneficiaries for Phase I and II repairs at Nabatiye schools are 10,791 students and staff members.

The engineers handing over Harouf school to the headmaster

Psychosocial and Youth Activities

A lot of emphasis has been placed on the psychosocial sector as field assessments have revealed the great psychological and social problems suffered by many youth of the conflict affected areas. Youth in the South and Bekaa are suffering from depression, anxiety, loss of hope and behavioral problems. These symptoms have been reported by many teachers and social workers there; the community pitches and playgrounds will engage youth in positive sports activities that will aid in alleviating part of their stress.

Community pitches in Baalbek

Mercy Corps and its partner the Lebanese Organization for Studies and Training (LOST) completed works on the Douris pitch. The court will be surfaced with epoxy and hoops will be installed by mid May. The professional resurfacing of the Osaira basketball court last week was completed (see picture to the left). The work is ongoing on the Youmouni basketball pitch and is expected to be complete by April 20, 2007. The Iaat Park is open to the public and children were pictured playing on it last week, an official opening is scheduled on April the 22nd at 4:00PM.



Osaira Basketball court newly resurfaced and hosting a basketball game

Construction of a multi-use playground at Toul's Technical School

Mercy Corps is constructing a multi-use community pitch at Toul Technical School. The engineers resumed work with the return of the good weather, currently preparing the base for the playground. Mercy Corps conducted a visit on the 20th of April to assess the evolution of the project at the school. "I am satisfied with the progress so far!" said the headmaster. The engineers are now ready to cast the concrete.



The progress on the playground so far



Teacher raising students' awareness on a tourist site in Lebanon

Baalbek event educating youth on tourist sites of Lebanon

Many youth in Lebanon are not acquainted with the geographical diversity and historical richness of Lebanon. For that purpose Mercy Corps, in partnership with LOST held an awareness event for children in Baalbek on the 19th of April. Over 700 students attended the event, where stations were set up showing posters and pictures from different historical and natural wonders around the country. Students visited each station and learned about the history and geography of each area, and a quiz was held at the end of the event to test the knowledge of the students (see success story below).

Children's right contest in Borj el Barajneh

Mercy Corps, the Borj el Barajneh Youth Leadership Center (YLC), and the Borj el Barajneh Social Development Center (SDC) organized a Children Rights Contest on Saturday the 14th of April at the Fourth Borj el Barajneh Public School. 387 children from around 25 public and private schools from Borj el Barajneh participated in the contest. Different grades took a customized exam that questioned their knowledge of their rights. The youth of the YLCs were involved in the logistics of organizing and conducting the event. At the moment, Mercy Corps, Borj el Barajneh Youth Leadership Center, and the Borj el Barajneh Social Development Center are planning to conduct a ceremony at the Borj el Barajneh Municipality to announce the winners of the contest and hand out the certificates and medallions.



Children right poster (left) and students sitting for an exam (right)

Counseling and psychosocial support to public schools in Nabatiye

Mercy Corps, Kamel Youssef Jaber Social and Cultural Center and the Public School Support Association started a series of activities for ten public secondary school students in Nabatiye Caza. Ten social workers will assist students that were psychosocially affected by the war in their relationship with their schoolmates, teachers and their parents. The project provides activities to students in art, sport, drama, journalism and dance while allowing social workers to attend and conduct individual and group counseling to the affected students.



Weekly Meeting with Social Workers

During the past two weeks, social workers started interacting with the students and reported in the weekly meeting that the youth in the south are pre-occupied with the possibility of another war. The students mostly felt misunderstood by adults; several cases of girls were unhappy due to the conservative culture in their communities leaving them with ‘limited freedom’. In some schools, classes are overcrowded, and students are overall hopeless and lack motivation to study.



A social worker talking to a student

In every school visited, Mercy Corps team could see a social worker talking to a student in the playground, or with all the class when they had a free hour. The goal of these discussions is to discover if any person needs assistance, since students can’t express themselves easily and might find it hard to confess to people that can judge them like their family or contacts. The social workers declared that after only a few days of meetings, the students are today more receptive, and trust them as much as they do their friends.

Mercy Corps team spoke to headmasters, they all have a positive impression on how the project is growing, and on the consequences it will have on the students’ future behavior. They all thanked Mercy Corps for the interesting activities that are being held in their schools, and expect to

see the students’ emotions alleviated.

Next week, the professionals will start the different artistic and educative activities with interested students, under Mercy Corps’ continuous monitoring.

II. LOGISTIC AND RELIEF COMMODITIES



Distribution of quilts in Baalbek

On the 16th of April, Mercy Corps distributed 75 and 120 quilts to the Institute of the Sisters of the Cross in Chlifah and the Sisters of Good Service in Jabbouleh, respectively. The distribution complemented a previous distribution of mattresses, wheelchairs and bed sheets to the Institute of the Cross. Mercy Corps will deliver kitchen and laundry equipment to the Nabi Sheet and Hermel orphanages on Monday, April 23rd.

Sister in Chlifah receiving the quilts

Fuel delivery to the Lebanese University, Faculty of Business and Administration in Nabatiye.

On Monday the 16th, Mercy Corps delivered 2,000 liters of fuel ‘mazout’ to the Lebanese University in Nabatiye, the supply should meet the University generator consumption for almost six weeks. The distribution was scheduled after the University requested additional quantities of fuel for the generator in December 2006, and considering the budgetary restrictions the Institution faced after the July war. The contribution will benefit 550 students.

III. WATER SANITATION AND HYGIENE

Distribution of Hygiene buckets in Borj el Barajneh

Mercy Corps distributed a total of 1,250 hygiene buckets to three of its Borj el Barajneh distribution partners, Children of Beirut, Charity of Islam, and Islamic Medical Service center, thus serving a number of 8,125 beneficiaries.



Ongoing work on the sanitary facilities of Bouayda School in Hermel

Repair of sanitary facilities in Baalbek, Hermel and Nabatiyeh

Mercy Corps and LOST are repairing sanitary facilities at six schools in Baalbek and Hermel. Work has started in the public schools whose sanitary facilities were chosen to be repaired: Beshwat, Tarayya and Wadi Safa in Baalbek and El Oussri, Brissa and Bouwayda in Hermel. In Nabatiyeh caza, Mercy Corps is upgrading sanitary facilities in 11 public schools. The maintenance and rehabilitation of the 11 facilities is being tendered and should be contracted in the first week of May. The project targets nine

schools that Mercy Corps have not implemented any engineering works on before and two schools¹ that have been included under previous repair projects but the works in the bathrooms required additional works. The project will benefit almost 4,000 students.

¹ The two schools are Insar Second Primary and Kfar Roumane Second Intermediate.

IV. AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

Orchard planting in a home for mentally disabled in Baalbek.

Mercy Corps is signing a contract with the American University of Beirut (AUB) to plant and recover an orchard for the Chlifah Sisters of the Cross- Home for the Mentally and Physically Disabled. The project will work to landscape, irrigate and plant fruit and vegetable gardens to help the center in becoming more financially secure, and to give the patients an outdoor area to enjoy.

V. NUTRITION

Distribution of food boxes in Borj El Barjneh

Mercy Corps distributed a total of 1,250 of food kits to three of its Borj el Barajneh distribution partners: Children of Beirut, Charity of Islam, and Islamic Medical Service center, thus serving 8,125 beneficiaries.



Food Kit distribution at Borj el Barajneh

VI. SUCCESS STORIES

Baalbek- April 19, 2007

Mercy Corps and LOST held an event for intermediate public school students to educate them on the history and culture of Lebanon. 705 students from the 7th and 8th grade of ten public schools in Baalbek attended the “Know Lebanon” event. Groups of students listened to the presentations of eight teachers that introduced them to the cities and ancient sites of Lebanon. A quiz was then held to test the knowledge of the students.



A stand displaying information on a Lebanese city in the event space



Saad Chalha

Saad Chalha, a 13-year-old student, was one of the participants. He attends grade eight at the Baalbek Takmeliya School. Saad listened to the teachers explaining about Baalbeck and Ashmoun cities. “Now I know how the Amawy Mosque was built!” exclaimed Saad, “It was first a church built by the Byzantines, and then the Moslems turned it to a Mosque.” Like Saad Chalha, the students who attended “Know Lebanon” event became more familiar with the cities and sites of Lebanon.

Mercy Corps is engaged with the communities of Baalbek, Hermel, Nabatiyeh and Borj el Barajnehh, providing children and youth with opportunities for psychosocial development and promoting education.

Nabatiye- April 19, 2007

Mercy Corps visited two schools rehabilitated in Nabatiye: Harouf Primary and First Intermediate School and Sheikh Naim Mehdi Primary School in Zawtar Charkiye.



Mr. Ali Aatweh, headmaster of Harouf's public school

The headmaster of Harouf, Mr. Ali Aatweh said: “The first attack on the south of Lebanon during the last war occurred around 50 meters from this school, on the 12th of July 2006 at exactly 04:07 AM. Ten persons were killed in the attack”. The headmaster further explained: “This establishment got heavily damaged. Due to the explosion’s pressure, the windows were broken, and so were the aluminum window frames, the roof had a lot of serious cracks, and even the taps didn’t resist. Moreover; when the war was over, we found around 150 cluster bombs in the playground that have been cleared by the Lebanese army and the MAG organization”.

The headmaster added “After the conflict, the students were really afraid to study in classes without any windows, especially that the winter was to arrive. When Mercy Corps started assisting this school, we could see the students feeling more secure and

relaxed. We don't know how to thank you for everything, and to be honest, our school is today much better than how it was before the beginning of the hostilities."

According to the headmaster, the Ministry of Education (MoE) decided not to charge any student for this academic year and promised to pay the registration fees. As of today, the MoE only reimbursed 35% of the total amount to the school. The school administration decided to borrow money to pay the teachers' salaries hoping to be released from debt soon, when and if the MoE fulfills their promise.

The headmaster concluded: "We must change the vision people have of public schools nowadays. After the material aid, I think we need more human and social help, like artistic activities, sports... the educational ministry doesn't include it in the students program. If possible, we'd also like to have the classes painted for the young students, because they must live like in a dream at school, but unfortunately, it's not really the case today."

Nabatiye- April 19, 2007

Mercy Corps team then interviewed Mr. Kassem Shaaitani, the headmaster of Sheikh Naim Mahdi Intermediate School in Zawtar El Charqiye.

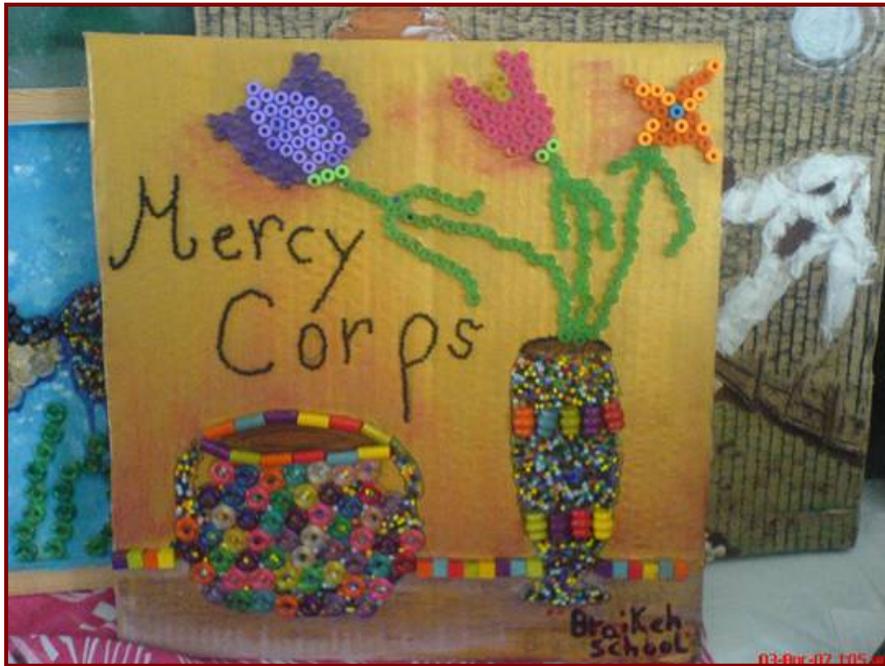


The new and repaired school doesn't show that a few months ago, the playground was a field of destruction. Six bombs and other cluster bombs were thrown on the school generating huge damages to the walls, the windows, the doors and the playground. The headmaster said: "Mercy Corps did all the rehabilitation work in the school, and in order to express how thankful I am, I assure you that without Mercy Corps' help, the students would definitely have stayed this year at home instead of studying. Many organizations proposed material assistance but Mercy Corps did the most important works, *'they are the school's spinal chord'*."

This year the school only received 50% of the total amount promised by the ministry, six millions Lebanese pounds (4000 USD).

Then he concluded by thanking each member of Mercy Corps for all their efforts, because as he sincerely insisted: "They planted hope and dreams in every student in our village... We will never forget it!"

Mr. Kassem Shaaitani, the Zawtar El Charqiye School's headmaster (above); school before, during and after repair (respectively to the left from top to bottom)



Art work done by students from Braiqa Primary School; where Mercy Corps completed repair works, distributed school kits, winter jackets and fuel for heating