

WEEKLY REPORT

MAY 4- MAY 11, 2007

Lebanon Rapid Post-Conflict Recovery Program

Welcome to Mercy Corps Lebanon's weekly progress report on activities implemented in southern Lebanon, Borj el Barajne, and the Bekaa Valley. Please direct any questions or content suggestions to Sarah Kouzi:

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Kindergarten student washing his hands in a newly constructed sanitary facility in Wadi El Safa public school, 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

Psychosocial and Youth Activities

Construction of two playgrounds in Nabatiye

Mercy Corps is constructing two community pitches at the Nabatiye Technical School and Toul Technical School. The Nabatiye Technical School playground's contractor is finishing painting the lines and the project will be handed over to the community next week.



Nabatiye Technical school – playground during dust storm on Friday (left) and Toul drainage construction (right).

In Toul Technical School, the contractor is working on constructing the drainage canal for the playground and additional reinforced protection for the playground wall, and the works are expected to be finished by the end of May and equipped by July.

Children's play in Borj Hammoud

The Youth of the Borj Hammoud Youth Leadership Center coordinated with the municipality of Borj Hammoud, local schools and Mercy Corps staff to re-activate the children's play named "Beitik Ya Siti", translated to "Your House Grandma". The play which was earlier postponed due to political instability, was held on May 11th with 400 children attending from different private and public schools in Borj Hammoud area. The aim of holding this play in particular was to raise awareness to the risks that the natural environment is facing, as well as to emphasize the importance of respecting and preserving our elders' heritage. The youth of the Borj Hammoud Youth Leadership Center believe that the play conveyed the message they wanted to send out. The young children enjoyed the play tremendously clapping several times while the cast were singing.



Children at the entrance, eager to get in



The stage of "Your House Grandma"



Picture drawn by a youth during the training

Art training in Borj Hammoud

11 members of Borj Hammoud Youth Leadership Center attended an art training session on May 6, 2007. The youth performed several beautiful drawings that left Mercy Corps staff and the art trainer amazed. At the end of the training, the youth were asked to fill out a questionnaire. When asked what they did not like about the training all the youth said that there was nothing not to like, they enjoyed the training greatly especially that most of them never had an art training before. "It was a very beautiful experience; especially because we learned about the different types of painting such as soft pastel and acrylic" said one of the trainees "there is nothing I didn't like about the art training, it was really great". The youth will continue to have several art training sessions that will culminate in a mural and an art exhibition.

Children’s rights award ceremony in Borj El Barajne

The Borj El Barajne Social Development Center, Borj El Barajne Youth Leadership Center, 25 private and public schools in Borj El Barajne and Mercy Corps held a Children’s Rights Award Ceremony at the Social Development Center on May 5, 2007. Seventeen prizes and games were distributed to the first, second and third place winners of the Children’s Rights contest. Around 200 children, youth, parents and teachers showed up at the event. The Children’s Rights Contest was held to assess the knowledge of the children about their rights. This project was also an opportunity to develop a common activity between the different community groups.



Distribution of awards to the winners of the children’s rights contest

Play raising awareness on people with disability

Mercy Corps staff invited around 175 individuals from different NGOs working with people with disabilities (PWDs) to attend a play named “Aalam Bila Sawet”, translated to English: “A world without a Voice”. The play, held in Monot Theater on May 7, 2007, was entirely created by a group of PWDs whose ages ranged between 17-25 years, hoping that through this play they could express their thoughts and tell people about the discrimination that they and other PWDs face. Mercy Corps staff wanted to support this talented group and give their “voice” a chance to be heard.



Attendees waiting to be seated and view the show (left) PWDs performing on stage (right)

Psychosocial assistance to students in public secondary schools in Nabatiye

Mercy Corps, the Kamel Youssef Jaber Social and Cultural Center and the Public School Support Association are implementing activities in public schools in Nabatiye and counseling students who need it the most. The activities aim at assisting secondary students to overcome stress, increase their participation and free expression in addition to encouraging team work.

This week, Mercy Corps and its partners continued the implementation of activities; overall fewer students attended the activities due to upcoming examinations as some preferred using their free time to study. The trainers, still committed to continue their classes, will most likely carry on for the next ten days.

One of the current activities that trainers are organizing in the schools is writing about social problems, such as the war, drug addiction, and the situation in the country. For instance, Jihane Haiek, a 16 year old girl attending Maifadoun public school, expresses her feelings in a piece entitled ‘call to heart’ where she states: ‘now is the most appropriate time to overcome violence’.

Donia Maatouk, another 16 year old adolescent, wrote about the abuse of drugs by youth and attributed the causes to negligence by the parents; stating that parents are absent for their children.

Monitoring closed projects: equipping art rooms in five public schools

Mercy Corps visited Hassan Hallal school, one of the five schools in Nabatiye that it equipped with art supplies after it had won the drawing contest a few months ago. During Mercy Corps’ visit, 25 students from eighth grade under the supervision of an art teacher (Hussein Hodroj) provided by Mercy Corps, were designing masks and hats for the festival that their village will organize over the weekend. The students were involved in the preparation of the community events. Another group of students was painting the walls of their art room, previously dirty and grey. Students, together with their teacher, took an initiative to make their closest environment more cheerful.



Student from 8th grade in Hassan Hallal while coloring a festival mask (right) and students painting the wall of the art room (left)



Picture portraying the stage of Fatima’s gate

Cinema and theater equipment in Nabatiye

Last Thursday, the Kamel Youssef Jaber Social and Cultural Center hosted a theater group from Beirut performing a play entitled ‘Fatima’s Gate’. The performance, attended by 400 Nabatiye dwellers, was only possible due to the earlier cinema and theatre equipment installed by Mercy Corps at the center. Nabatiye, a community home to 40,000 residents does not have a theater or a cinema hall therefore Mercy Corps contribution was much needed. The Kamel Youssef Jaber Social and Cultural Center is planning regular movie projections and meetings with directors and/or actors.

Delivering books to three schools in Nabatiye

Mercy Corps delivered books on the 9th of May to three public schools in Nabatiye: Jbaa, Nabatiye for Girls and Rimal Insar. The gift is an award for winning the Scrabble Tournament held on the 30th of March. Schools were given an opportunity to select books according to their needs. Each school sent to Mercy Corps’ appointed bookstore in Beirut an Arabic, French and English teacher to ensure the broadest selection. The contribution will assist the three schools in developing students’ interests, knowledge and creative thinking.



Mercy Corps delivering books to Rimal Insar School

News conference held in Baalbek

On May 7th, LOST held a news conference in Baalbek, where Rami Lakkis, LOST founder, presented the different projects that had been implemented by LOST and Mercy Corps during the past nine months, including food and books distribution, construction of playgrounds and parks, English and computer trainings, drawing competitions in addition to many others. Mr. Lakkis also discussed the projects that will be implemented in the future. 100 attendees listened and watched the presentation, amongst them municipality leaders and NGOs. LOST then thanked Mercy Corps for supporting and collaborating on the projects.



Dr. Rami Lakkis giving his speech (above) and attendees (below)

II. WATER SANITATION AND HYGIENE

Repair of sanitary facilities in Baalbek, Hermel and Nabatiyeh

Mercy Corps and LOST are repairing sanitary facilities in six schools in Baalbek and Hermel. The work is 70% complete on the six public schools’ sanitary facilities of Beshwat, Tarayya and Wadi Safa in Baalbek and El Oussri, Brissa and Bouwayda in Hermel. Furthermore, another assessment took place to identify and repair yet another six public schools’ sanitary facilities in the Baalbek Hermel area. Mercy Corps currently hired an engineer and the project design of the six facilities will be complete within two weeks. Mercy Corps team in Baalbek accompanied the designer to all six schools and met together with the school directors to determine the best design. (See success story in part III).

In Nabatiye caza, Mercy Corps is upgrading sanitary facilities of 11 public schools. The project targets nine schools that Mercy Corps has not implemented any engineering works on 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. In an effort to support the repair works done on the sanitary facilities and ensure their sustainability, Mercy Corps, in partnership with the Kamel Youssef Jaber Social and Cultural Center is implementing the Environmental and Hygiene Awareness Project, addressing students in grades five through nine of all 40 primary and intermediate schools in the caza.



Students in Shokeen during the environmental lectures on 10th of May

This week, environmental lectures were held at nine schools². Mercy Corps team monitored sessions in Shokeen school where 85 children aged between eight and nine years attended the lectures and in Hassan Halal Habouch intermediate and primary schools were 95 students, aged between nine and 13 years listened to the lectures. The lecturer discussed the importance of the environment, the polluting agents, and the ways to protect nature. Each school will plant its own garden with the assistance of the trainers and dedicated teachers will be encouraged to launch a permanent environmental club at each school.

¹ The two schools are Insar second primary and Kfar Roumane second intermediate public schools.
² The nine schools are Kfar Romane, Doueir, Alkfour, Habouch, Hassan Hallal, Fariha Haj Ali, Zbedien, Abed Al Latief

III. SUCCESS STORY

7 May 2007- Baalbek

In Baalbek, children often refuse to go to the sanitary facilities at school; some of the reasons are their deplorable structure coupled with a general lack of maintenance. After conducting an assessment, Mercy Corps identified 12 sanitary facilities in urgent need of repair at public schools in Baalbek and Hermel. The work is nearly complete in the six public schools' sanitary facilities of Beshwat, Tarayya and Wadi Safa in Baalbek and El Oussri, Brissa and Bouwayda in Hermel. The remaining six bathrooms are being contracted.

“We are very satisfied by the work done on the bathrooms; the workers are very serious” said the headmaster of Wadi El Safa public school, Ali Jamal El Din, he then continued “We went through very difficult times during the war when a bomb was dropped right next to the school killing seven residents of the area who were seeking shelter behind the bathroom walls, three of which were our students.” While trying to overcome the psychological trauma endured by the teachers and the staff at the school who had witnessed the tragedy, the school administration sought donations and funds to repair the school. The Swiss Bank via the Lebanese Government supported repainting the walls and replacing the broken glass. “It was not enough” commented the headmaster



Kindergarten students in Wadi El Safa school using the new sanitary facility ergonomically appropriate for their size

“It gave us hope when Mercy Corps decided to repair the schools’ bathrooms: we need to see that there is still someone who is willing to lend a helping hand, a little humanity”. The newly constructed facilities will benefit 119 students that attend Wadi El Safa public school daily in grade levels ranging from kindergarten to first intermediate.

In another public school located in Beshwat, the facilities were destroyed and rebuilt again. “We never went there” answered Georges Kozah, a student in Beshwat school when asked what he thought about the previous bathrooms. He then further explained “We were ashamed of the old bathrooms, we tried not to go there, it was a simple hole in the ground, the new bathrooms are not done yet, but you can tell they will look good”. Sandy Keyrouz, another student at Beshwat school also expressed her gratitude: “The previous bathrooms were old and I am happy new ones are being built”. The new bathrooms will be used by Georges, Sandy and 148 other students in grade levels ranging from kindergarten to grade nine.



Sanitary facilities in Beshwat, under construction (right) Georges Kozah (left) Sandy Keyrouz (below)

Mercy Corps is committed to supporting schools in the area of Baalbek, Hermel and Nabatiye cazas, distributing school kits, fuel for heating and conducting repair works in over 53 public schools.