



**MERCY CORPS INTERNATIONAL
Lebanon Program**

**RECONSTRUCTION AND EXPANDED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES
GRANT AGREEMENT No HNE-A-00-97-00065-00**

**SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT
For the period October 1, 97 – February 28, 1998**

Prepared by

**Hiam Shadid
Officer-in-charge**

**Jacqueline Moukheiber
Program Manager**

A Rationale

MCI has been exceptional in its choice of villages in need of assistance. The challenges facing us in the field, even though very difficult at times, are being overcome (see section on obstacles)

Each cluster, or rather each village has its own characteristics in terms of the degree of difficulty in implementation. However, the overall governing aspect in our six clusters is the real absence and neglect of the government in these areas. People are not used to legal procedures. This problem is inherent of the characteristics of the area during and prior to the war period. Akkar area still shows strong remittance of past feudalism. The post war era has shown no improvement due to the current policy pursued by the government of Lebanon, or due to security conditions in the extreme south, this is a condition we are fully aware of during implementation of our program. Idle human potential with the desire to migrate to cities is evident in all the clusters and villages.

The current strategy of the Government of Lebanon shows interest in Akkar area, but no large scale actions in terms of the real sense of economic revival, and the Southern areas are inaccessible to "direct" government intervention and reform policies.

One of the most pressing problems is that of citrus fruits in Akkar. The decrease in demand in the regional market and the competition from Syrian citrus fruit, in addition to juice producers refusal to utilize local production, has put many farmers in desperate conditions. 1/8 of the valley of Akkar is citrus fruit (180000 Hectares, 2/24/98 Al-Nahar newspaper). This year was the worst in citrus fruit production where the selling price was less than cost price. Many farmers are desperately recognizing the need for substitute crops and some have started to plant avocado, potatoes and other vegetables as well as grains.

The syndicate of Agricultural engineers in Akkar has requested that the government put more care into the Agricultural sector to avoid the migration of farmers due to excessive losses. They have requested farmers to be exposed to skilled technical assistance and that the government should search for new markets.

Lebanon's rural areas are in need of revitalization and restoration in all aspects

- The introduction of crop varieties viable in the local and regional market is a growing necessity
- An infrastructure network and agricultural extension services to allow proper access to land, distribution to markets
- Agricultural training on scientific up-to-date methods as the use of obsolete techniques is still prevalent
- The introduction of low cost technology would help the improvement of crops and by-products, conserve energy and reduce the mismanagement of existing natural and human resources

In some villages in our northern clusters and in Bent Jbeil, children are seen walking on streets during what should be school hours. These children range between the ages of four and older. A lot of effort needs to be put into creating the awareness for minimum schooling. Many families allow the children to become laborers at a young age and the Lebanese law prohibits child labor under the age of 13 rather than 18. However, in our clusters no one is around to enforce the law.

A positive aspect that shows hope for improvement is that even though the role of women is marginalized in our program areas, there is a strong tendency for these women to learn more in order to provide a better future for their children.

In brief, the criteria followed in choosing our clusters are:

- Villages are economically depressed and impoverished
- Agriculture is the main economic activity
- Villagers are willing to cooperate and participate in project implementation
- Untapped resources exist
- Clusters are not receiving assistance from other NGOs
- Villages have geographic proximity and have social and economic linkages to each other
- Villages are of different religious affiliations
- Villages suffer from chronic neglect by the Government of Lebanon
- Degrading but reversible environmental conditions
- Diminishing but reparable economic & agricultural opportunities

B Activity Summary

Activity Goal & Purpose

USAID has awarded a four -year Reconstruction and Expanded Economic Opportunities Grant (No HNE-A-00-97-00065-00) to Mercy Corps International as of October 1,1997 MCI, through the implementation of this grant, works to support USAID strategy that emphasizes the importance of rebuilding rural communities, expanding economic opportunities, supporting policy reform and environmental protection

MCI activities are in partnership with local community based organizations and program beneficiaries Moreover, MCI ensures full coordination with the concerned local government authorities and ministries to avoid unnecessary duplication of funds and to ensure proper alignment with rules and regulations of the government for legal support of activities

This document covers program activities from October 1,1997 to February 28,1998 During the first fiscal year MCI will focus on 12 out of 49 villages in six clusters, 2 of which are within the security zone in South Lebanon

1997-1998 Project Distribution by Cluster

REGION	CLUSTER	No of VILLAGES	No of PROJECTS
North Lebanon/Akkar	Bebnine	3	5
North Lebanon/Akkar	Drayb	2	4
North Lebanon/Akkar	Wasat el Qateaa	3	5
Extreme South Lebanon*	Bent Jbeil	2	3
South Central Lebanon	Rachaiya	1	1
South Central Lebanon*	Hasbaiya	1	3
TOTAL	6	12	21

* *Within security zone*

Professional teams consisting of civil and agricultural engineers, social and health workers are working with village communities towards integrated rural development to accomplish the goal of MCI

The creation of a healthy, sustainable rural environment with economic opportunities, adequate infrastructure and improved community life with the purpose of enabling farmers to stay on their lands and encouraging the return of the displaced to rural areas

To date, the program has benefited over 1,110 families in 12 villages within the 6 clusters mentioned above In addition, 247 5 hectares of land have been rendered accessible to irrigation and/or cultivation 65 individuals from 3 villages, a number of schools and local community-based organizations have participated in our civic literacy program which will allow them to participate more effectively in their communities and heave the way for a broad-based participation of villagers, the promotion of self-help and a sensitization of citizenry to the importance of resource conservation and environmental protection

MCI has begun actualizing its goal by revitalizing the physical, economic and social viability in its clusters through the following program targets

<p>1 <i>The establishment of an adequate physical infrastructure</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 agricultural roads have been rehabilitated, opened and/or protected • 2 irrigation schemes have been initiated One has been finalized and the second is pending till the dry season for the concrete work to proceed <p>Consequently 247 5 hectares of land have been reclaimed and/or irrigated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One sewage treatment facility is in the process of initiation with excavation work to proceed in March
<p>2 <i>The restoration of social infrastructure</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 access roads and a retaining wall with 20m3 have been rehabilitated and/or protected One access road is accomplished and the other is in process • 2 model schools are to be constructed during the Spring season Designs and drafts are in the final stage with legal permits being processed through the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education
<p>3 <i>Enhanced economic potential</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The projects mentioned above aid in enhancing economic potential as they allow further access to land by farmers Many feeder roads were inaccessible in winter, thus preventing cultivation of land and loss of production of winter crops • In addition, the implementation of the demonstration farms in each of the 2 program regions are underway Drawings are final and legal permits are being processed 20 cows have been purchased from the US-Lebanese Agricultural Cooperation Project through the Ministry of Agriculture Two land plots in our program areas have been leased In Bebnine, fencing of the land is on-going, over 400 forest trees from the Ministry of Agriculture have been planted around the periphery and the soil is being prepared for planting new variety fruit trees In Hasbaiya field work will proceed in two week's time These farms will be utilized to train farmers on new and effective methods of crop production and the use of low-cost technologies such as biogas pits and solar energy systems
<p>4 <i>The encouragement of civic society</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At present, MCI social and health workers are training women on basic living skills and environmental awareness Our role is one of community partner, capacity builder and mentor In many instances, MCI has taken the role of mediator in conflict resolution and conflict prevention • Four of MCI social and health workers are from within our cluster areas, all are women, respected and empowered by their communities and can definitely set an example of how far an individual can progress within and for her community
<p>5 <i>Increased environmental protection</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In combination with our civic literacy program, MCI field staff is training villagers on environmental awareness, the linkage of health to the environment, preservation of forests as well as effective management of existing resources • Projects implemented by MCI have a combination of program targets Increased environmental protection and the enhancement of sound environmental practices are in built into all project types For instance, schools and demonstration farms will be surrounded by forest trees, will utilize low-cost, safe septic disposal methods (reusable whenever feasible), and will utilize solar energy for heating, in our attempt to introduce and encourage this practice in our clusters

C. Project Highlights and Lessons Learned

Linkages

Through the implementation of this program, MCI is collaborating and strengthening its relationship with the Ministry of Social Affairs(MOSA), the Ministry of Hydraulic and Electrical Resources, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Environment and local government bodies

The Ministry of Agriculture is coordinating with MCI on various projects. One example is the access road rehabilitated for the Akkar tree Nursery belonging to the Ministry (see success stories). This road has allowed ordinary vehicles to access the nursery and over 200,000 olive and almond trees and 500,000 varieties of forest trees were distributed this season. Also, the Ministry has provided our farms with to date 400 forest trees and plants of various varieties. These trees will serve as windbreaks to protect vegetable and fruit orchards, as well as provide a good source of feed for bees. Among these forest trees there are olives and pines trees which are a source of income.

The Ministry of Social Affairs contacted their centers in Akkar to facilitate the training programs undertaken by MCI field workers. They are ready to provide their facilities when needed.

The Ministry of Hydroelectric Resources has formed a committee of NGOs to coordinate development assistance to Akkar area. MCI is an active member in this committee. Local government bodies under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior are doing their best to expedite formalities relating to legal permits required by MCI in constructing facilities such as schools and farms.

MCI's strategy utilizes various linkages to strengthen project impact and ensure sustainability. All stakeholders are encouraged to participate in program design and implementation. Our demonstration farms link this program to the US-Lebanese Agricultural Cooperation Project in coordination with USAID and the Ministry of Agriculture. We will further link the farm project to our biogas project for environmentally sound and low-cost technology.

At present, with the dairy cow project introduced to Lebanon rural areas by the US-Lebanese Agricultural Cooperation project, will come the need to provide environmental safe disposal of cow dung. Cows produce 20 to 25 times the waste of a human being and the urine is of high acidity detrimental to soil. The bio-gas application will allow reduction in acidity and the reuse of waste as natural fertilizers.

Innovation

MCI is working on changing the nature of relationships between the government sector, the communities and ourselves so that the implementation will be more conducive to real development to allow for "real" participation of stakeholders and beneficiaries.

MCI's interest in renewable environmentally feasible low cost sources of energy will allow us to link previous pilot projects to current program activities. We will be opening the field to allow farmers access to project know-how during our construction phase at our farms. Technicians who have been trained and have applied the work previously will help build and demonstrate bio-gas pits and solar energy systems that are easy to replicate at an individual level.

Obstacles

Many obstacles hinder the smooth and rapid implementation of MCI planned and approved projects

- Security conditions in the South of Lebanon Two of the six clusters are within the security zone and one other is on the periphery Field personnel are trusted by communities due to successful past experience with MCI, but precaution is taken due to the sporadic clashes and due to travel restriction in some areas requiring two passengers per vehicle
- The slow processing of legal documents in government offices Many of our current projects need clearance and license from various ministries Our constant coordination with these offices allows us to have priority treatment, but still the bureaucracy of public offices is unavoidable For example, after all plans and drafts of the demonstration farm are finalized and after fulfilling all conditions needed within the rules and regulations of all necessary departments, there is one month delay due to an announcement which has to be posted to allow for any individual refusal of such a project if verified within legal grounds
- Political affiliations and feudalism in Akkar area
- The absence of civic awareness and civic participation in our clusters, especially in Akkar area This is a handicap for the villages Most citizens either have no knowledge with respect to their legal rights and responsibilities or abuse those of other citizens as well as government property In the South, in spite of the absence of government, civic participation is more obvious The Southern areas are more flexible and oriented towards the public good

All this does not mean villagers are not willing to cooperate and participate in project design and implementation, but it does mean that that some people have the intention, but lack the will and/or political power and status to be pioneers in change and innovation One of our challenges is to create self-motivation to enhance their standard of living by helping them to see a clearer picture of what the future would be like if nothing is done to improve the stagnant situation

Success Stories

Following are a few examples of accomplished and on-going work in the field

Bebnine Nursery Access Road Rehabilitation Project

Bebnine Nursery consists of forest trees, that are distributed free of charge to farmers to be planted during the winter season. The road to the nursery becomes inaccessible in the winter season except for huge trucks, which further the damage. This prevents planting the trees at the suitable time. The project which involved resurfacing the existing road with base coarse material to provide all-weather access to the nursery by farmers, was successful in helping out with such timely distribution. In addition, MCI field personnel informed communities of the availability of the trees, some of which can no longer be removed from the site due to the fact that many trees were strongly rooted in the nursery soil. The road was prior to the project impassable. The nursery offers trees for reforestation as well as olive trees to farmers, municipalities and local organizations free of charge. MCI project benefits extend to all the above and not only to the Ministry of Agriculture that owns the nursery.

200,000 olive and almond trees and 500,000 varieties of forest trees were distributed this season. The ministry will guarantee yearly maintenance of the road.

This nursery takes 4 per thousand of the Ministry's budget.

Borj el Arab Agricultural Road and Irrigation canal Projects

The projects included resurfacing an existing dirt road used as an access road as well as an agricultural road. The road was impassable especially in the winter season. It was almost abandoned except for children and grownups living on the side of the road. Irrigation was by dirt canals allowing the water wastage and loss of at least 30%. These canals are tertiary canals, part of the large irrigation system of Akkar valley. In winter canals overflow and add ruin to the road and in summer the earth absorbs most of the water available. MCI intervention was quadruple fold with the aim of

- Preventing water waste/ energy conservation
- Increasing the amount of irrigated land by 30 hectares
- Increasing work potential and produce 2 to 3 times more than past produce
- Stabilizing the inhabitants in this rural area

The road was rehabilitated by layering base coarse, compaction and providing drainage culverts wherever necessary. The irrigation canals were rehabilitated. The farmers joined MCI team in an awareness session highlighting the vitality of water, the necessity for economizing and how proper maintenance can avoid loss of irrigation water and lengthen the life of the road which would require yearly maintenance of low cost. MCI is now in the course of forming a committee of farmers to take care of this issue.

The villages assisted in all labor work.

Bqerzala Sewage Project

Raw sewage effluent is collected along the main road leading to the village of Bqarzla. The villagers have been complaining about the nuisance the site has been causing, but still many villagers add to the problem by dumping household waste into the pit. MCI has stressed the importance and necessity of involving both Municipality and beneficiaries in the design and cost of the project. To date the community has surveyed the land and road levels necessary for the design of the sewerline. They have carried out the design and intend to pay part of the excavation and labor cost. MCI will commence work in March.

Jdeidet el Qauteaa Agricultural Road

The length of base coarse 1200m

Concrete work on 350m length of road

The area of land benefiting from the road is 24 Hectares

The aim was to increase the income for the farmer through utilizing the land for vegetable cultivation such as onions, peas, beans, wheat which are all winter crops.

In the past, villagers were obligated to drive through muddy and rocky terrain impeding the proper utilization of the land and decreasing the potential for winter production.

Farmers were unable to plough their land or had to postpone work on the land till a later date. This affected land quality as well as product quantity.

The local community has contributed to the project without much effort on our part to convince them as they saw the priority of such a project and its necessity.

The locals contributed in the installation of a rainwater culverts and a supporting retaining wall, a concrete bridge (labor & material cost), in addition to all labor pertaining to the concrete work of the road along steep slopes and finally the cost of land taken up by the road.

The results have shown on the ground

Extended reclamation of land amounting to 8 Hectares this current season.

RECONSTRUCTION AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Activity Progress Report

October 1 1997 February 28 1998

Region	Cluster	Village	Indicator #	Project Description	Amount Allocated	Community Participation	Status / Phase	Planned Impact	Actual To Date	Status %	FYPenses MCI to date	Expenses CS to date
Akkar	Drayb	Hamla	1 2 b	2300 m of rehabilitated agr road + 1360 m protecting base course	9 407	3 200	Completion	25 H	25 H	100%	9 343 0	3 260 0
Akkar	Drayb	Tlayl	1 2 b	3100 m of agr road opened + 4 culverts + 1500m protecting base course	18 010	4 700	Completion	30 H	30 H	100%	17 925 0	4 900 0
Akkar	Bebune	Bebune	1 2 b	400 m of rehabilitated agr road + protecting road with base course	2 640	500	Completion	1 5 H	1 5 H	100%	2 640 0	500 0
Akkar	Bebune	Boj el Arab	1 2 b	2300 m of rehabilitated agr road + protecting road with base course	17 500	8 050	Completion	15 H	15 H	100%	17 280 0	8 550 0
Akkar	Bebune	Jandet el Qateaa	1 2 b	1200 m of rehabilitated agr road (350 m of concrete 850 m of base course)	8 008	8 000	Completion	14 H	14 H	100%	8 000 0	9 250 0
Akkar	Drayb	Hamla	1 2 b	800 m of rehabilitated agr road + protecting road with base course	4 274	1 600	Completion	25 H	25 H	100%	4 080 0	1 200 0
Akkar	Wasat el Qateaa	Qantara	1 2 b	1500 m of agr road (opening new segment 700m, & rehabilitating exsbing segment 800m, 200 m of concrete 1200 m of base course)	12 301	14 200	Completion	35 H	35 H	100%	11 758 0	14 200 0
South	Bmt Jbel	Ama Ech Chaab	1 2 b	835 m of rehabilitated agr road + protecting road with base course	8 750	3 000	Completion	12 H	12 H	100%	7 500 0	3 000 0
South	Bmt Jbel	Debel	1 2 b	1500 m of rehabilitated agr road + protecting road with base course	15 750	12 000	Completion	65 H	65 H	100%	15 750 0	12 000 0
Akkar	Bebune	Boj el Arab	1 2 d	1000 m of rehabilitated irrigation network (fixing canals)	15 000	3 000	Completion	15 H	15 H	100%	14 875 0	3 020 0
South	Bmt Jbel	Ama Ech Chaab	1 2 d	1000 m2 of rehabilitated irrigation scheme (repairing water catchment)	27 869	39 546	Execution	10 H	10 H	38%	10 656 0	4 715 0
Akkar	Wasat el Qateaa	Bjara	1 3 a	330 families benefiting from new sewer and treatment system	26 555	19 175	Agreement	330 Families	0	0%	100 0	0 0
South	Hasbaya	Hasbaya	1 3 a	1000 families benefiting from new sewer and treatment system	50 000	7 000	Agreement	1000 Families	0	0%	0 0	0 0
Akkar	Drayb	Tlayl	1 3 c	260 students benefiting from new solar weatherized school	80 000	40 000	Agreement	260 students	0	0%	250 0	0 0
Akkar	Wasat el Qateaa	Bjara	1 3 c	70 students benefiting from new solar weatherized school	29 975	15 000	Agreement	70 students	0	0%	0 0	0 0
Akkar	Wasat el Qateaa	Bjara	1 3 e	35 families benefiting from opening new access road & protecting (1150 m concrete road + 250 m retaining wall)	18 306	5 120	Completion	35 Families	35 Families	100%	18 300 0	5 200 0
Akkar	Wasat el Qateaa	Bjara	1 3 e	360 families benefiting from opening & protecting access road	15 400	4 000	Execution	360 Families	360 Families	15%	2 300 0	1 200 0
South	Hasbaya	Hasbaya	1 3 f	50 families benefiting from protected access road with 20 m3 retaining walls	2,032	1 000	Completion	50 Families	50 Families	100%	1 871 0	1 050 0
South	Rachaya	Labaya	1 2 i c 12	10 families benefiting from accessing equipment & materials for manufacturing cement pipes	16 000	0	Procurement	10 Families	0	6%	1 000 0	0 0
Akkar	Bebune	Bebune	1 2 i d *	1000 farmers benefiting from integrated demonstration park in a four year period	143 650	0	Agree/Proc	1000 Farmers	0	21%	30 569 40	0 0
South	Hasbaya	Hasbaya	1 2 i d **	1000 farmers benefiting from integrated demonstration park in a four year period	143 650	0	Agree/Proc	1000 Farmers	0	18%	26 294 78	0 0
* 400 farmers in Bebune 300 in Wasat el Qateaa 300 in Drayb												
** 400 farmers in Bmt Jbel, 300 in Hasbaya 300 in Rachaya												
											72 045	200 492 18

PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES TO DATE BY VILLAGE, CLUSTER AND PROJECT TYPE
 October 1, 1997 - February 28, 1998

Cluster / Village	Physical Infrastructure Projects	Social Infrastructure Projects	Economic/ Income Generation Projects	Civic Literacy and Participation Projects	Environmental Projects	Unit of measure					
						Families	Hectares	Families	Students	Families	Women
Bebune * (center)	300	15									
Bebune (Demonstration Park)				On-going							
Boj el Arab	25	30									
Jdardel el Qaitaa	20	14									
Cluster Bebune	345	455									
Bagaa	35		On-going								
Bqerzala * (center)			360	On-going							
Qantara	35	35									
Cluster Wasat el Qaitaa	70	35	360								
Harila	35	50									
Layl	50	30	On-going	On-going							
Cluster Drayb	85	80									
SOUTH CENTRAL LEBANON											
Libbaya				Procurement							
Cluster Rachaya											
Hasbaya			50								
Hasbaya (Demonstration Park)											
Cluster Hasbaya			50								
EXTREME SOUTH											
Aaria Ech Chaab	100	22		On-going							
Debel	100	65		On-going							
Cluster Bint Jbeil	200	87									
Total 6 Clusters	700	2475	410								65

See notes on environmental projects pg 5

PROGRAM TARGETS FOR YEAR 1
October 1, 1997 - September 30, 1998

Area	Project Specifications	# of Projects	Quantity	Project Impact			Beneficiary			
				Current	Future	Unit	Current	Future	Type	
Akkar	Agricultural Roads	7	11600 m	145	5	260	5 H	455	600	farmers
	Micro Irrigation Schemes - Canals	1	1000 m	15		15	H	10	30	farmers
	Sewer and Treatment System	1	750 m	4		4	Jobs	330	330	families
	Schools	2	16 rooms					330	600	students
	Access Roads	2	1850 m					395	535	families
	Demonstration Park	1	2 H			2	2 H	1000	2000	farmers
	Agricultural Roads	2	2335 m	77		77	H	150	150	families
South	Micro Irrigation Schemes - Water Catchment	1	1000 m ²	10		10	H	50	50	families
	Sewer and Treatment System	1						1000	1000	families
	Retaining Wall for Access Roads	1	20 m ³					50	50	families
	Manufacturing Concrete Pipes	1						10	400	families
	Demonstration Park	1	2 H			2	2 H	1000	2000	farmers