MERCY CORPS RESPONDS TO THE CRISIS IN LEBANON

CONTEXT
One month into the crisis in the Middle East, the government of Lebanon reports that more than one million people – nearly one-third of the country’s population – have fled their homes. The government of Israel reports that 300,000 of its citizens have been displaced. The movement of people and relief supplies in and out of Lebanon, especially to southern Lebanon, is dangerous and extremely difficult.

If the status quo – fierce fighting and limited access – continues, the current humanitarian crisis in the Middle East could turn to a humanitarian catastrophe.

We at Mercy Corps urge a ceasefire and immediate, continuous, and safe humanitarian access to the people who need us most. These are the only ways to ease the suffering we see on all sides of this conflict.

As fighting continues and thousands cannot return home, the challenges of sharing space and scarce resources may exacerbate ethnic and sectarian tensions, and further destabilize Lebanon. Mercy Corps’ years of experience in conflict resolution is standing us in excellent stead, as we help communities find ways to avoid the worst of these issues.

With more than 10 years experience working in Lebanon, and 30 staff and volunteers, Mercy Corps was one of the first agencies to begin meeting the immediate needs of the country’s most vulnerable people – especially children. Yet even as we continue to take a lead role – working to reach more than 200,000 displaced and vulnerable Lebanese citizens with our emergency relief programs – Mercy Corps is also planning longer term recovery efforts in anticipation of the huge needs that will affect thousands of families attempting to return home as soon as it is safe.

We are partnering with United States government agencies to restart economic programs in southern Lebanon, and are working to ensure that displaced people are not afflicted with water borne illnesses and other diseases that often develop in cramped living conditions. And we have recently hired a local Lebanese mental health professional, to help us help children and their parents process the current enormous changes in their lives.

Since the conflict began, Mercy Corps has sent convoys to Nabatiye, Marjayoun and Saida, reaching nearly 6,000 people with food and blankets. We have also reached nearly 50,000 people displaced to the Aley area with food, water and other essential supplies. And Mercy Corps has also distributed 2,000 infant kits in south Beirut, complemented by hygiene and health education to families in Bourj Al Barajne. We continue to provide daily assistance near Beirut and in the devastated southern area of Lebanon, distributing food, water, blankets and other supplies to thousands of families.

MERCY CORPS’ RESPONSE
Mercy Corps is playing a major role in the humanitarian relief efforts in Lebanon. Mercy Corps CEO, Neal Keny-Guyer, recently met with Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora to discuss the best ways to facilitate humanitarian relief.

Photo: Cassandra Nelson/Mercy Corps

Mercy Corps CEO Neal Keny-Guyer (left) meeting with Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora
Mercy Corps has also reached nearly 50,000 of the most vulnerable among the displaced families in the Chouf region southeast of Beirut. In the days to come, we plan to reach more than 100,000 people there.

ADDITIONAL MERCY CORP LONG-TERM REBUILDING PROGRAMS
Mercy Corps is preparing to mount a long term response to assist areas affected by the fighting. Programs will likely include:

- Cash-for-Work projects to repair and rehabilitate important infrastructure.
- Youth programs to address the psychosocial needs of the children affected by the conflict.
- Economic development programs to restore lost livelihoods.
- Water and sanitation projects that will help rehabilitate water supplies and improve hygiene in villages and communities.

MERCY CORPS IN THE MIDDLE EAST
Mercy Corps has worked in the region since the early 1980s, responding to emergency needs and making long-term investments that promote local development and the quest for peace and stability. We began work in Lebanon in 1993 with development programs that revitalized rural economies in the south. In Iraq, Mercy Corps’ rehabilitation and reconstruction programs address local needs, while our community development programs support peaceful change.

Mercy Corps continues to respond to what the United Nations calls a “deteriorating” humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. Today power is unreliable, clean water is scarce, medical supplies are dwindling and people are desperate. Mercy Corps has reached 6,000 of the most vulnerable Gazans with humanitarian aid, including people with disabilities who received vital medical supplies, and destitute families who received food packages.

MERCY CORPS WORLDWIDE
Mercy Corps works amid disasters, conflicts, chronic poverty and instability to unleash the potential of people who can win against nearly impossible odds. Since 1979, Mercy Corps has provided $1 billion in assistance to people in 82 nations.

With headquarters in North America, Europe, and Asia, the agency’s global programs employ 3,200 staff worldwide and reach nearly 10 million people in more than 40 countries. Over the last five years, more than 90 percent of the agency’s resources have been used for programs that help people in need.

HOW YOU CAN HELP
Our most urgent need is to purchase sufficient emergency relief supplies to reach displaced and vulnerable populations in Lebanon. Here’s how your donation could help:

- $20 provides a child of a displaced Lebanese family with two weeks’ worth of diapers and other essential supplies.
- $50 provides a displaced Lebanese family with a week’s worth of canned food.
- $200 provides a displaced Lebanese family with food for a month.

LEBANON CRISIS FUND:
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You must be the change you wish to see in the world.
~ Gandhi