



**ANNEX 1 LEAD EVALUATION IOCC
LEBANON EDUCATION ASSISTANCE FOR
DEVELOPMENT (LEAD) PROJECT**

December 6, 2006 – September 10, 2009

Project Evaluation Report

Final

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**SUBMITTED TO: International Orthodox Christian Charities(IOCC)
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ACRONYMS

ACT	Action by Churches Together
CHF	Cooperative Housing Foundation – CHF International
FHS – UoB	Faculty of Health Sciences – University of Balamand
GoL	Government of Lebanon
IOCC	International Orthodox Christian Charities
LEAD	Lebanon Education Assistance for Development
MEHE	Ministry Of Education and Higher Education
OFDA	Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance
PTAs	Parent Teacher Associations
SCOBA	Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in America
SFEP	School Feeding and Education Program
UoB	University of Balamand
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WHO	World Health Organization

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This report was prepared for the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) in response to their request to document lessons learned and best practices related to the Lebanon Education Assistance for Development (LEAD) Project supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

It draws extensively from the valuable and special contribution provided by Mrs. Linda Shaker Berbari from IOCC.

I gratefully acknowledge the contribution of the IOCC concerned team members and monitors, Mrs. Nina Lahham from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) and Ms. Habbouba Aoun and her team from the University of Balamand (UOB) who provided me with the needed information in relation to this Project.

Special thanks go also to all school directors, teachers, students and parents who took the time to respond to my queries.

I hope that this documentation will be considered as a sound basis for future plans to develop and implement similar projects in Lebanon and in the region.

I. Introduction and Background Information

Children in Lebanon require special attention and care in view of the impact of the armed conflict on their health in general and psychosocial needs including educational well-being in particular. Properly addressing the needs of these children and their families will enable them to better overcome everyday difficulties and promote families' psychosocial interactions.

IOCC Lebanon's main activities relate to facilitating access to quality education. This is achieved by increasing students' and parents' awareness about good schooling habits, thus, ensuring respect and fulfilment of the rights of these children as expressed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. IOCC also believes that the improvement in the school learning environment and the involvement of the community in the local education system will ensure that children live in a safe and protected environment; which in turn fulfils their rights to safe care, education, health, and other basic needs.

Public schools in Lebanon suffer from major shortages at the level of human and material resources. Public schools are poorly equipped in what relates to educational materials and equipment and their teachers, in general, are less trained and subjected to continuous training and capacity building in comparison to private schools. Psychosocial services offered through public schools in Lebanon are also less present and effective than those offered through private schools.

Public schools in Lebanon encompass a significant percentage of children from economically disadvantaged families and with particular socio-economic needs. Many of these schools are buildings that were originally intended to be private residential dwellings and lack the proper installations meant for schools. As a result, these schools are poorly equipped and lack science (e.g., physics, chemistry, biology, etc.) and information technology laboratories.

Compounded by the above, Parent Associations in public schools in Lebanon are poorly involved in their children's education in view of their limited awareness about the value of their involvement at this level. Furthermore, the limited awareness and education of public school children and their parents on health and public health issues is noted. This is reflected in the poor health habits among these students as mentioned by their teachers, and also through learning difficulties and disorders leading to poor achievement, and/or school attrition.

It should be also noted that despite the poor situation of public schools in Lebanon and in view of the economic crisis, a number of students have shifted, in the past few years, from private to public schools leading to tremendous pressure on the latter, as noted by MEHE.

Despite the commitment of the Government of Lebanon (GoL) to restructure and improve the education system in Lebanon through MEHE, the overwhelming needs at this level remain to be huge in scope and type and difficult to be properly addressed in view of the growing needs to upgrade schools and equip them to provide quality education to students.

In view of the above and building on the success of the past five years in implementing an educational project in coordination and cooperation with the MEHE and various local partners, IOCC expanded this project to improve the physical and mental well-being of school age students and to facilitate access to quality education in public schools in addition to upgrading these schools over a period of two years extending from December 6, 2006 until September 10, 2009, through the LEAD Program funded by USAID.

This report represents the findings of the evaluation of the outcomes of this project.

II. Objectives of the Evaluation

This evaluation was undertaken as part of the extended LEAD program. The overall objective is to improve the design and the impact of interventions in the sector through drawing on lessons learned from past and ongoing interventions for future planning, programming and programs' identification.

This evaluation covers the Project period extending from December 6, 2006 until September 10, 2009.

In particular, this evaluation serves a triple purpose, as follows:

- To assess the performance and impact of the past operations;
- To provide a learning opportunity with regard to future operations; and
- To identify key issues to consider in the preparation of the second phase of the Project.

The evaluation covered the following:

- the performance of the project as a whole, and
- the related organizational and management issues.

In addition, the evaluation looked into the key strategic choices that include:

- the implementation approaches (participation, facilitation and accompaniment), and
- the strategic alliances (partnerships and stakeholder relations).

These were assessed in terms of their relevance to the overall operational context, their successfulness in view of delivering the desired results, and their cost-effectiveness. Project issues such as the overall progress towards achieving the project's goal, the coherence and synergy of the different project's components in contributing towards the project priorities were also examined.

Moreover, the following organisational and management issues were considered in terms of their appropriateness, adequacy and cost-effectiveness and in view of the operational context and strategic choices:

- the management structure, including lines of responsibility and decision-making processes;
- the capacity of human resources, including numbers, qualifications and clarity of the roles;
- administrative rules, regulations and processes, including their application to ensure transparency and accountability;
- systems ensuring opportunities for learning and development, at the level of both the organization itself and its staff.

III. Methodology

The evaluation is expected to play a crucial role in improving the relevance, effectiveness, and impact of USAID and IOCC's future work in the educational sector in Lebanon. For this reason, the evaluation focused on analyzing the following five Evaluation Criteria:

1) **Relevance** of the project as a whole and of its individual components, which is the appropriateness of the project objectives and design to address the real problems, needs and priorities of the intended target groups with respect to the physical and policy environment within which it operates.

2) **Efficiency** in the allocation of resources for carrying out the planned activities, which is an indication of how well activities transformed the available resources into the intended results, and of the quality of the results achieved.

3) **Effectiveness** of the project, which refers to the contribution made by the programs' results to the achievement of the Project' and Program's intended objectives.

4) **Impact** that the project may be expected to have, i.e. the effect of the project on its wider environment and its contribution to the wider development goal.

5) **Long-term potential sustainability** of the project's interventions and its achievements, which refers to the likelihood of a continuation in the stream of benefits produced by the project after the period of external support has ended.

An Evaluation Checklist served as a guideline for the fieldwork and data collection from different concerned stakeholders.

The main activities conducted within the context of the evaluation encompassed the following:

- preparatory desk work prior to the field assignment;
- preparatory discussions between the evaluator and the Project Coordinator to get briefed about the Project and deal with logistic issues, and
- field work including meetings and interviews with staff and other stakeholders (Appendix 1).

After data/information gathering and internal reflection on the findings, a debriefing meeting in which findings were presented to the senior project personnel, and major issues and recommendations outlined took place; the aim of the debriefing was to provide a chance for IOCC staff to further clarify any issues and to also correct any misinterpretations including factual errors and/or observations.

Further to that, a draft copy of the Evaluation Report was developed to be reviewed by IOCC before developing the final Evaluation Report.

IV. Assumptions and Constraints

The main assumption throughout the entire evaluation exercise was that IOCC staff and stakeholders including benefiting schools were open and willing to share their project experiences, challenges and aspirations for the future.

In order to ensure that the exercise was participatory and conducted in an enabling environment that would allow key stakeholders the opportunity to share their achievements, lessons learned and frustrations, all people met within the context of this evaluation were made aware of the importance of the evaluation exercise for the sake of the project and therefore for their benefit in return.

The timeframe of the evaluation exercise was a constraint since it did not allow for an additional in-depth and thorough assessment targeting an additional number of benefiting schools distributed over different geographical areas, despite covering, through this evaluation, a selected number of schools (N=21) distributed over the five Lebanese Mohafazat.

V. Description of the IOCC LEAD Project and its Context

A. History

IOCC was founded in 1992 by the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in America (SCOBA) as a response to emergency relief and development issues around the globe. IOCC currently operates in 10 countries in Eastern Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.

Through its programs, IOCC assists some of the most vulnerable people in the world: orphans, refugees and displaced persons, elderly, children, single parent families, and individuals with disabilities.

In Lebanon, IOCC started its work in 2001 with the implementation of a School Feeding and Education Program (SFEP) in 243 public schools funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and in close collaboration and coordination

with the Lebanese Ministry of Education, the University of Balamand (UoB), school directors and staff, parents, students, and the local communities and municipalities.

In 2006 and further to the July war in Lebanon, IOCC implemented a relief program financed by the United States Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and Action by Churches Together (ACT International) through which it distributed food and other relief goods to displaced people. More than 3,500 families in 65 border villages of the South have benefited from these projects. Moreover, more than 44 schools and three hospitals were targeted by the OFDA fund in addition to the implementation of ten water projects.

Since December 2006, IOCC continues its support for public schools in Lebanon through the LEAD Program, with a grant of US \$ 4.7 million from the USAID. An additional amount of \$1 million was granted to IOCC from USAID to extend its Project till the end of September 2010.

LEAD, implemented in partnership with the University of Balamand - Faculty of Health Sciences (UoB – FHS) and Lebanon's Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), reaches nearly 75,000 students in more than 213 public schools located in northern and southern Lebanon, Mount Lebanon, Bekaa, and Beirut.

B. Project's Goal

The goal of this project is to rehabilitate and modernize school facilities while providing material aid and facilitating access to quality education, increasing students' and parents' awareness to good schooling habits and, creating a model for community involvement in their local education system.

C. Project's Objectives

The Project's objectives include:

1. To improve schools' infrastructure by carrying out basic rehabilitation repairs, and providing science and computer laboratories, furniture and school equipment to help raise the standards of public education in Lebanon.
2. To develop students' and parents' awareness and knowledge on issues relating to their physical, mental and social well-being, though carrying out health, and

3. To develop community development and outreach activities through the creation of student clubs, Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) that guarantee an active community involvement and support.

D. Project's Expected Results

The project's expected results include:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| <u>Objective 1</u> | Improved learning environment and conditions in 66 public primary and 4 secondary schools.
Improved physical structures in 50 public primary schools.
80 public primary schools received needed school equipment and furniture.
Upgraded technical capacity of the MEHE. |
| <u>Objective 2</u> | Increased awareness of students and their parents in what relates to health, nutrition and social issues.
Increased commitment of MEHE to matters relating to raising awareness among school children and their families. |
| <u>Objective 3</u> | Increased involvement of parents in school related activities.
Initiated community interest to matters relating to the educational system.
Increased involvement of secondary schools' students in community support activities.
Improved coordination processes among all stakeholders. |

E. Project's Intervention Sectors

IOCC implemented activities, within the context of this project, are classified under the following intervention sectors:

1. **Infrastructure Improvement and Material and Equipment Provision** for activities related to carrying out basic rehabilitation repairs in 67 (later 70) schools, distributing furniture and school equipment to 112 schools, establishing science and computer laboratories and media libraries in 34 schools, and conducting trainings for school teachers on proper use of computer laboratories,

2. **Awareness and Education** for activities related to carrying out health and nutrition activities as well as social awareness programs that promote a sustainable behavioral change among the populations in the targeted schools, in addition to developing and distributing “Nour & Noura” magazine and educational posters to all primary public schools in Lebanon, and executing educational play performances for students.
3. **Community Development** for activities related to the activation of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and Student Clubs that guarantee active community involvement and support, in addition to extracurricular activities such as youth – to – child programs (youth camps, festivals, etc.).

VI. Key Findings

A. General Outcome

Through the IOCC LEAD project, targeted schools were quite adequately assisted while taking into consideration their needs, gender, and cultural sensitivities. This was facilitated by the fact that IOCC monitors are chosen from the local areas and know the specific characteristics of the local communities.

Targeted schools were initially actively involved in the identification of their needs but the adopted participatory approach necessitated a more upgraded involvement of schools in what relates to agreeing on the type of assistance they would get from IOCC.

The IOCC general policy is to focus on public schools that lack the needed resources to operate effectively and efficiently in all geographical areas in Lebanon. This was translated in this project through the criteria of selection of benefiting schools that included schools that did not benefit from major donations nor from other national and international funders as clarified by MEHE.

Through the project interventions, the targeted schools’ physical condition was positively upgraded, which also positively influenced the learning environment at

¹ EDUWARE is a company incorporated in Beirut, Lebanon. It is a leading provider of computing solutions for educational institutions (schools and corporate training) in Lebanon.

these schools despite some challenges faced with some contractors in a limited number of schools.

In addition, students and parents, benefiting from the educational activities of this project, witnessed a positive influence on their quality of life at the physical and psycho-social levels. They reported sensing an upgraded self awareness about health, nutrition and social issues which enabled them to better assess and manage any personal or social issue emerging at any of these levels. The targeted group also showed an interest to get exposed to additional related subjects in view of their value and importance.

The project also succeeded to increase the involvement of parents in school related activities despite the challenges faced in sustaining this involvement and related commitment. Students were also involved in community activities, which positively and directly impacted other community members.

Successes witnessed within the context of this project pushed other schools not benefiting from the IOCC LEAD project to plan for similar educational activities conducted within the context of this project in view of the perceived achievements and extended impact from within the schools to the outside communities.

The need for enlarging the scope of the Project activities to cover a larger group and include a more diversified type of interventions within the context of each of the project sectors was emphasized.

The efficient networking and collaboration that occurred among IOCC and its partners, UoB and MEHE, contributed to achieving the objectives of the project in general and establishing the needed systems necessary for the sustainability of the project results mainly at the level of MEHE and within schools.

IOCC is well respected as an organization by its beneficiaries and collaborators at the national level. This was well emphasized by all parties who met within the context of this evaluation in addition to their perception of its credibility as an organization, and the relevance, validity and reliability of activities and interventions conducted within the context of this project.

IOCC is working in a longer term development project targeting schools, and local communities which implies long term involvement and commitment in this sector.

IOCC knows the political and cultural sensitivities of this sector and is able to operate within its context with the support of its local partners, UoB and MEHE, and local target groups including schools and communities.

B. Project's Goal and Objectives

IOCC LEAD project consisted of an integrated set of activities aiming at sustaining quality education in public schools while coinciding with the national objectives within this context.

Through this Project, IOCC added infrastructure improvements to schools by carrying out basic rehabilitation repairs in 67 (later 70) schools, distributed furniture and school equipment to 112 schools, established science and computer laboratories and media libraries in 34 schools, and conducted trainings for school teachers on proper use of computer laboratories, in partnership with EDUWARE.

Ensuring a proper use and management of the provided assistance to the designated schools helped improve schools' infrastructure and contribute in raising the standards of public education in Lebanon.

IOCC is aware that additional efforts are needed to be invested at this level through ensuring a proper monitoring and follow up to the benefiting schools and through making sure that concerned human resources that need to operate and use the provided equipment and material are available and properly trained for this purpose.

In order to develop youth's, students' and parents' awareness and knowledge on issues relating to their physical, mental, and social well-being, IOCC, in partnership with the UoB, carried out health and nutrition activities as well as social awareness programs that promote a sustainable behavioral change among the populations in the targeted schools.

Educational activities also included the publication and distribution of "Nour & Noura" magazine and educational posters to all primary public schools in Lebanon, school awareness meetings on health and nutrition, and educational play performances for students.

The conducted awareness programs succeeded in upgrading students' and parents' awareness and knowledge on issues relating to their physical, mental and social

well-being as mentioned by school directors, teachers, students and parents themselves, and officials at MEHE. Students also made use of the acquired knowledge through this Project in their academic programs and activities.

The extent of behavioral change at this level among the target groups in the selected schools was difficult to assess within the context of this evaluation.

IOCC LEAD project also aimed to build up community development and outreach activities through the activation of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and Student Clubs that guarantee active community involvement and support, in addition to extracurricular activities such as youth – to – child programs (youth camps, festivals, etc.).

Parents' involvement in school related activities as well as youth and students in community work helped promote the development of these communities and encourage the involvement of other parents and students in other schools in their community development and support too. Sustaining parents' involvement and commitment at this level is a challenge faced by IOCC, concerned schools and MEHE.

The above stated project achievements are expected to contribute to all national processes aiming at rehabilitating and modernizing school facilities and raising the public education in Lebanon.

C. Implementation Factors

The Project implementation was generally ***timely, relevant, appropriate, effective, efficient, cost-effective, participatory, gender-sensitive, flexible, transparent, accountable, and proceeding towards sustainability.***

IOCC's response to the existing needs was ***timely*** and ***relevant*** from the perspective of the beneficiaries. Interviewed school directors, teachers, parents, and key officials at MEHE emphasized that IOCC interventions are affecting them positively since they are responding to immediate needs and helping to upgrade the school environment as well as their knowledge and perception about health, life skills, educational, environmental and civic education issues thus contributing to upgrading their quality of their psychosocial life.

The same was emphasized by MEHE officials that acknowledged the timely contribution of the IOCC LEAD project. Through this project, IOCC with UoB, continued to support MEHE, a support that was initiated under the previous USDA School Feeding Educational Project (SFEP). This support aimed at: (i) developing the school health strategy that was later adopted by the World Health Organization (WHO), (ii) setting the expected profile of school health counsellors, and (iii) developing and clarifying the roles and responsibilities of these counsellors. Contributions at this level facilitated the success of the work done at the levels of school clubs and after-school activities that are undertaken within the context of IOCC LEAD project.

The majority of schools benefiting from the infrastructure and equipment components of the project noted that the services provided to them were, in general, **appropriate** in terms of professional **quality and type**. A limited number of schools faced some problems with the assigned contractors to undergo some infrastructure interventions in terms of quality of material and products used, but IOCC attempted later to solve these problems by ensuring close monitoring and follow up to the work of contractors and began to evaluate further activities in a more rigid approach for selecting contractors.

As for the educational activities, all concerned expressed appreciation for the value of these activities in terms of type and quality. A need for additional awareness activities in relation mainly to psycho-social subjects was expressed in addition to publication of additional newsletters per year and conducting additional play auditions.

All provided services took into consideration differences in needs among the different groups.

As for the **usability** of the provided equipment and material within the context of this project, additional efforts need to be invested in the selection of the benefiting schools, to make sure that these schools have the needed and qualified human resources to make good use of the provided grants, otherwise a poor usability of these items will prevail. Also more efforts are needed to ensure a better follow up of the usability of each of these grants further to their provision and try to identify the factors limiting their usability. MEHE could play a major role at this level in helping IOCC in the selection of these schools and ensuring proper monitoring and follow-up processes at this level.

The project is proven to be **effective**, since all the set objectives were achieved and exceeded the set targets in most instances. These objectives were noted by concerned stakeholders to be **relevant, complementary** in nature, and addressing real needs among the target groups.

Efficiency and cost-effectiveness of IOCC interventions was ensured through the cost-sharing approach adopted at the level of schools that contributed to the cost of infrastructure upgrade at their schools with a minimum amount of 10% of the total cost of the actions. This 10% was ensured from donations from the local communities and were not deduced from the school total annual budget. This emphasizes the involvement and concern shown by the local communities to upgrade public schools in their neighbourhoods.

It is also important to emphasize at this level, the overwhelming commitment shown by IOCC and its partners, including UoB and MEHE, reflected in going beyond the call of duty to serve and assist their target group. Furthermore, the choice of IOCC and UoB project personnel with an appropriate professional background and expertise helped in improving the project efficiency.

The allocation of financial resources for carrying out the planned activities was not examined within the context of this evaluation.

IOCC interventions were also **flexible** within the availability of funds. The team was able to tailor its services and interventions as per the prevailing needs at the level of each beneficiary or target group. Flexibility was shown while dealing with MEHE where bureaucratic procedures prevailed as well as at the level of schools that had expressed needs that were in most of the times beyond or extended available funds.

Through its interventions, IOCC engaged, to the extent possible, its target groups. It engaged MEHE while conceptualizing the project and in its following phases, as well as engaged schools in the assessment of their needs and planning for related intervention activities. However, a better **participatory approach** needs to be ensured with schools in the selection process for the infrastructure projects to occur within their schools. But it should be noted, within this context, that IOCC was aware of the value of the adoption of a participatory approach at this level, thus IOCC initiated its adoption in the cost-extension phase of the LEAD project.

The level of **transparency and accountability** towards the beneficiaries was acceptable, as expressed by the project beneficiaries who emphasized the transparent approach and methodology adopted by IOCC while dealing with them within the context of this project and their engagement and involvement in the whole intervention related processes.

Furthermore, it was noted that persons with different confessions, backgrounds, and profiles were assisted without discrimination. These included different schools and communities distributed over the six Lebanese Mohafazats.

As for **gender sensitivity**, through IOCC's interventions, male and female students, teachers and parents were targeted as per the objectives of the project with no gender discrimination.

An analysis of **sustainability** focused mostly on *ownership of objectives and achievements by different stakeholders, institutional capacity installed, and financial sustainability.*

The ultimate goal of the IOCC LEAD project is to support MEHE education and school health strategy in Lebanon. Thus, all conceptual and practical work implemented within the context of this project aimed at supporting the school learning environment; which is in line with the strategy adopted by MEHE.

Creating capacity in partners was also considered a crucial element to the success of the project and at the same time an essential condition to ensure the sustainability of accompanied initiatives. MEHE relevant personnel were actively involved in the conceptualization and implementation of all project activities, thus building their capacity at these levels and testing their acquired skills through the implementation of these activities. Furthermore, systems and procedures were created for the different activities of the project. These systems and procedures are being used as a reference source in other developmental projects implemented by MEHE.

At the level of schools, the acquired knowledge and skills within the context of this project, allowed also school officials to guide other donors that are working with them on proper procedures to follow at the ministry and school levels and helped them to be more aware of related needs.

Positive signs for sustainability have been noted in particular for the quality of relations between the Project staff and Project partners such as MEHE, schools and local communities. These relations seem to have been positively impacted by the work of IOCC and UoB whereby different units at MEHE started to collaborate together in view of the creation of the advisory committee at MEHE that aimed at advising about the LEAD project. Still, additional work is needed to strengthen systematically the collaboration and coordination among the different units at MEHE. At the level of schools, it was noted that parents, school directors and local communities are better aware of the role and value of PTAs, thus more appreciation to the role of PTAs in upgrading and supporting the school environment was created through this project.

Finally, one can conclude that the project interventions and achievements are contributing to upgrading the educational environment and system in Lebanon. The impact of this project is well noticed at this level by concerned counterparts.

D. Organizational Issues

IOCC has a well structured, well managed and independent management body that facilitated the implementation of the project.

IOCC planned and implemented this project in an adequate way while adopting proper management tools which increased the efficiency and effectiveness of the interventions. Every key staff member at the organization had a well-defined and clear role. Proper coordination and collaboration processes occurred among them with no bureaucracy prevailing which facilitated processes and ensured better results.

IOCC adopted clear, structured and well documented procurement policies that proved to be efficient and effective allowing distribution of grants and equipment and material to targeted beneficiaries in due time.

A proper monitoring system was used by IOCC to control the planning and implementation processes. Monitors submitted regular reports to the country office which in turn submitted on a monthly and quarterly basis monitoring reports to the IOCC's US head office. In addition, monitoring visits were conducted on a regular basis by senior personnel from IOCC to monitor implementation in the field and get the feedback of the beneficiary schools and communities about related interventions.

IOCC also conducted one self-evaluation activity targeting a sample of the benefiting schools. This evaluation occurred during the third quarter of the third year and aimed at assessing the level of beneficiaries' satisfaction and whether the set objectives were reached in a timely and appropriate manner. The results of this evaluation were shared with USAID.

E. Collaboration with Counterparts

IOCC LEAD project was quite effective in relation to concerned government agencies, local partners, coordinating bodies, private sector, and others.

IOCC collaborated well with all concerned at the national level including MEHE, UoB, the Cooperative Housing Foundation (CHF), EDUWARE, public schools and local communities. Despite some challenges faced with EDUWARE's timely responsiveness, IOCC succeeded in reaching the objectives set in terms of provision of related training to concerned teachers through showing some patience and flexibility but not at the expense of the quality of work.

Representatives of the noted bodies met within the context of this evaluation, expressed their satisfaction towards their collaboration with IOCC and are looking forward to continued future collaboration.

F. Visibility and Perception

USAID and IOCC identities were visible at the level of assistance provided through branding on the provided items or the signs put in the renovated schools in the initial phases of the infrastructure component of the project. Later, and upon USAID's request, these signs were removed. As for the educational component of the project, all produced material were branded with the USAID, IOCC, MEHE, and UoB logos and proper acknowledgement to the funding agency in compliance with the donor.

IOCC implementing staff members were aware of USAID as a granting and support body. Concerned stakeholders at the national as well as community levels are aware of IOCC's type and scope of work and its related projects and priorities since its staff made sure to always coordinate IOCC interventions with all concerned and at different levels of their involvement in the various sectors.

G. Conclusions on Performance

The main achievements of IOCC within the context of the LEAD project include:

- Ability to integrate its work within MEHE and increase the commitment of all concerned to the value of upgrading the learning environment in public schools in Lebanon, in addition to its contribution to the institutionalization of school health within public schools in Lebanon.
- Ability to operate within the different geographical regions in Lebanon, each with a different contextual background and cultural and social disparities.
- Ability to respond appropriately to some of the overwhelming environmental as well as psycho-social needs prevalent among the targeted schools and local communities.

The general impact of IOCC operations was that the targeted schools and communities were quite adequately assisted and empowered in a dire socio-economic period and political situation affecting the different regions in Lebanon.

Through this project, IOCC operated with an aim to upgrade the public schools environment in Lebanon through working on the development of the schools human resources as well as students, parents and local communities at the psycho-social level in addition to responding to the immediate infrastructure and material needs of schools seeking to alleviate their disadvantaged physical condition.

The impact of this project with its different components was noted to be, by all concerned, effective, relevant, comprehensive and addressing real needs among the target groups. Ensuring the sustainability of the project requires additional work with governmental counterparts, mainly MEHE, to better institutionalize school health within public schools and upgrade the capacity of concerned stakeholders mainly the health supervisors and counsellors to assume a role only dedicated to upgrading the health of public schools in Lebanon without assuming other teaching responsibilities.

IOCC, as a humanitarian body, is well appreciated by all concerned at the local, regional and national levels and at each of these levels a will and desire for future involvement and /or collaboration with IOCC was expressed.

VII. Lessons Learned/Best Practices Documentation

A. IOCC LEAD Project – As a Process

1. Planning

IOCC Strategy/Project Conceptualization and Development

- Any development project succeeds if planned with a comprehensive strategy. This was the case for the IOCC LEAD project which had clearly articulated objectives, kept the target groups at the centre of what is being designed, conducted appropriate needs assessment research activities, undertook target group segmentation, carefully planned and implemented related activities, used appropriate channel and delivery choices, and planned for monitoring and feedback.

IOCC project as part of a spectrum of issues/interventions relevant to public education in general and school health in particular

- The IOCC project activities overlap with other issues related to the provision of education in public schools in Lebanon in general and school environment in particular. A clear vision about how to interlink these issues to ensure maximum effectiveness resulting from the project activities prevailed.

Defining Project Scope and Expectations

- Conducting infrastructure work, awareness and extracurricular activities in schools and providing equipment and material cost money to implement and sustain over time. IOCC identified a balance between expectations about what could be done and the resources allocated to carry out related interventions. Proper assessment of this balance at the project level was essential to establish achievable deliverables and to prioritize these deliverables according to available resources.

2. Implementation

Lessons Learned from Previous Experiences

- The initiation and implementation of the IOCC LEAD project was facilitated by the fact that IOCC already had a built experience in the education sector in Lebanon and had learned some lessons from this experience. This helped in achieving effective and efficient results.

Project Management

- IOCC engaged effective project managers and personnel and management strategies to improve the prospects for project success.
- IOCC developed and adopted proper management systems and procedures that lead to more efficient and effective results.
- The project implementation processes were facilitated by clear definition of roles and responsibilities of each of the concerned counterparts (IOCC, MEHE, UoB, etc.) and proper assumption of these responsibilities by all concerned.

Project Approach

- IOCC adopted a dynamic discipline while implementing the project based on creativity, high levels of efforts and commitment, focus, flexibility, and strategic thinking.

Cultural Sensitivity

- IOCC took into consideration cultural perspectives and, therefore, incorporated community beliefs and values in the strategy and approaches of the project's activities, which was essential to its success.

Target Group Engagement/Participatory Approach

- IOCC established links and relationships with, and actively involved all the project's target groups in the different phases of the project and recognized the important role each plays and shared information with them. This was important for the success of the project and lead to stronger results. This also allowed for ensuring that the interventions address real needs on the ground.
- The participatory approaches adopted by IOCC presented motivational factors for upgraded engagement and commitment towards the project's set deliverables by concerned stakeholders.
- IOCC learned from the LEAD project that schools need to be more involved in the final selection of the type of infrastructure support they will receive from this project to ensure a more relevant assistance. Thus, IOCC started to adopt this approach in the project cost-extension phase.

Crisis Management

- IOCC developed a crisis communication plan whenever a project intervention was considered controversial or in anticipation of project challenges.

3. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring Framework

- IOCC believes that monitoring is an important tool for understanding operational dynamics and detecting what works and what does not. The project relied on inexpensive methods for monitoring its activities such as observation, site visits, meeting with stakeholders, etc.

Evaluation Framework

- IOCC evaluated the project from the very beginning when it was being planned, by conducting proper assessments, as well as during implementation and after the project was completed. This was important to ensuring success.

Feedback Mechanisms

- IOCC ensured the availability of feedback mechanisms through the adoption of proper communication channels with its counterparts. This was important for reinforcement and for clarifying questions and concerns.

Documentation

- IOCC understands the importance of documenting the project inputs and implementation experiences to understand successes and failures. Systematic documenting of the project was a key element of the overall management system.
- Better documentation at the level of MEHE is noted. The creation of a matrix tabulating all data available about public schools in Lebanon and type of assistance provided to these schools by different counterparts would be helpful for better investment of available resources at this level.

B. Lessons Learned – By Theme

1. Infrastructure and Educational Material and Equipment Provision

- To ensure a better selection of schools benefiting of this component of the project, MEHE is expected to play a proactive coordinating role among all national and international parties providing assistance to the sector. This would lead to a better investment of resources available to the sector.
- IOCC perceived the need to activate the engagement of school directors in the final selection of the school infrastructure sub-projects to be supported in the later phases of the project.

- Furthermore, the need to ensure a better monitoring and follow up to the assistance provided at this level was also perceived by IOCC.
- To ensure better benefit and usability of the assistance provided at this level, MEHE needs to be more engaged in ensuring the needed monitoring and follow up actions.
- Schools need to be more engaged in ensuring the needed maintenance to the received assistance. This will allow benefiting from this assistance for a longer period of time.

2. Awareness Materials

- The awareness materials developed by UoB are characterized by the following:
 - Novelty and creativity made them more appealing for use and dissemination.
 - Illustrative and colored material with drawings and photographs made them more attractive to children and youth.
 - Simple and inexpensive material improved usefulness and cost-effectiveness more than expensive and elaborate products.
- UOB conducted a proper and in-depth pre-testing of awareness materials developed within the context of this project, which lead to meaningful information allowing for the development of relevant products appropriate to the target groups and culturally sensitive for the various communities.

3. Capacity Development-Training

- IOCC, MEHE, and UoB perceive the need for a long-term capacity building at the grassroots' level. Schools and local communities are dynamic entities with particular needs requesting dynamic approaches for intervention.
- Training undertaken within the context of this project took into account the profile, role and job description of the persons being trained in order to be relevant. All training designs were individualized in order to meet the needs of those being trained.
- Training activities undertaken within the context of this project were always evaluated to assess whether they were effective in meeting their

- IOCC and UoB emphasized the engagement of the MEHE and school officials in the different processes of training, including assessment of training needs, review of the training package, and even participation as trainees. This would ensure future support to related programs in these schools.
- The well-designed and tested training modules developed within the context of this project can serve as reference materials for national and local training programs.
- IOCC, MEHE, and UoB perceive the need for follow-up and/or refresher training, which would be necessary to reinforce the acquired knowledge among trainees.
- The capacities of people developed at the level of MEHE, schools and targeted communities, as a result of the project activities, will be reflected in developing institutional capacities.

4. Gender Mainstreaming

- IOCC made sure to incorporate a gender perspective in project planning and policy-making.
- IOCC engaged men and women in planning, implementation and decision-making to ensure a successful development intervention.

5. Youth and School Children

- Through the IOCC LEAD project, the youth and school children, themselves, were empowered by involving them in development interventions as designers, implementers, and as spokespersons of the educational component of the project. This was helpful in ensuring relevance, acceptance and broader coverage of related interventions.

6. Advocacy

- Advocacy consisting of persuading others to support an issue of concern to an individual, group or community is one of the areas that should be accounted for within the context of any development project to ensure that all interventions initiated within the context of the project would be backed up by key influential figures at the grassroots as well as at the policy/decision making levels. This would increase the perception of the

7. Building Partnerships for Integration and Sustainability

- IOCC ensured the project integration at two levels: the integration of the Project concepts and messages in concerned programs at the national level and the integration of the project approaches and methodologies in MEHE school health unit and schools.
- The integration of the IOCC LEAD project themes into MEHE required structured and operational links among IOCC, MEHE, and UoB rather than only cooperation. It was perceived by the three concerned organizations that this was primordial to build alliances among themselves to help build the national expertise while avoiding waste of resources and duplication of services.
- Communication and collaboration that occurred among IOCC, MEHE, and UoB included real engagement in planning, implementation and evaluation of development activities, not only verbal exchanges. This enriched the process of work by bringing together the different existing expertise and comparative advantages attempting to spread them among all concerned.
- The success of the IOCC LEAD project, an internationally supported project could be attributed to partnerships with local governmental and non-governmental bodies. Those national bodies have a better understanding of the local context and ensure local sustainability.
- Public/private partnerships that occurred within the context of this project, through the engagement of UoB, MEHE, local contractors and EDUWARE, contributed efficiently in sustaining the impact of the Project and widening its scope to reach a larger segmented group.

- The proactive collaboration at the National level was influenced by personal initiatives taken by the Director General, the coordinator of the school health department and concerned others at MEHE as well as some school directors whose positive attitude was essential for the success of the Project activities.
- Commitment at the policy level, shown by the Minister and Director General of MEHE, is perceived to be essential for the integration of the school health initiatives at the national level. Such commitment translates into resource support.
- The collaboration and coordination that occurred among IOCC and CHF, lead to optimum results and outputs in addressing development educational needs.

VIII. Conclusion

The mandate of IOCC in Lebanon is to contribute to upgrading the learning environment and education in public schools in Lebanon thus contributing to the overall improvement of the quality of life of children and youth.

Through the IOCC projects in Lebanon in general and the LEAD project in particular, rehabilitation and modernization of public school facilities aiming at facilitating access to quality education have been emphasized. Awareness building on good schooling habits among students and parents and upgrading community involvement in the local education system have also been highlighted.

The achievements of the IOCC LEAD project greatly contribute towards the promotion of the well-being of public school children in Lebanon.

This documentation study provides information about experiences related to the implementation of the IOCC LEAD project in close collaboration with MEHE and UoB. These experiences could be shared with all concerned and would also be of value for those interested in replicating these experiences while taking into consideration the context specificity and sensitivity of the target groups.

Appendix 1

People Interviewed within the Context of this Study

#	Name	Organization	Position	Date of Interview
1	<i>Nina Lahham</i>	<i>MOEHE</i>	Coordinator of School Health Department – Guidance & Counselling – Ministry of Education & Higher Education	8/12/2009
2	<i>Habbouba Aoun</i>	<i>UoB</i>	Team Coordinator	30/12/2009
3	<i>Jacqueline Khneysser</i>	<i>UoB</i>	Project Assistant for School Clubs	30/12/2009
4	<i>Bassam Nehmeh</i>	<i>UoB</i>	Project Assistant for Youth & PTAs	30/12/2009
5	<i>Maria Saade</i>	<i>UoB</i>	Project Assistant for Mental Health	30/12/2009
6	<i>Linda Shaker Berbari</i>	<i>IOCC</i>	Program Manager	4/12/2009 11/12/2009 30/12/2009
7	<i>Fadi Haddad</i>	<i>IOCC</i>	Logistics & Monitoring Manager	4/12/2009
8	<i>Crystal Safadi</i>	<i>IOCC</i>	Monitor-Beirut, North & Mount Lebanon	4/12/2009
9	<i>Rita Zorba</i>	<i>IOCC</i>	Monitor- South Lebanon	4/12/2009
10	<i>Carole Ghia</i>	<i>IOCC</i>	Monitor - Bekaa	4/12/2009
11	<i>Mohammad Mehieddin</i>	<i>“Zrarieh” Intermediate School</i>	School Director & 1 Social worker, 3 Students	8/12/2009
12	<i>Kassem Sbiety</i>	<i>“Martyre Nemeh Haydar” Intermediate School</i>	School Director & 1 Parent, 3 Students	3/12/2009

13	<i>Moufid Abou Saad</i>	<i>“Showaya” Intermediate School</i>	School Director & 1 Science Teacher, 1 Parent, 2 Students	<i>3/12/2009</i>
14	<i>Georges El Shoufani</i>	<i>“Rmeish” Secondary School</i>	School Director	<i>8/12/2009</i>
15	<i>Adel Siefdin</i>	<i>“Riyak” Secondary School</i>	School Director & 1 Science Teacher	<i>1/12/2009</i>
16	<i>Mouhammad Haydar</i>	<i>“Kobb Elias” Mixed Intermediate School</i>	School Director & 1 Social worker, 1 Parent, 2 Students	<i>1/12/2009</i>
17	<i>Ahmad Awada</i>	<i>“Bireh” Intermediate School</i>	School Director	<i>9/12/2009</i>
18	<i>Kamal Amin</i>	<i>“Haoush el Harimeh” Intermediate School</i>	School Director & 1 Science Teacher	<i>1/12/2009</i>
19	<i>Moustafa El Rabaa</i>	<i>“Omar Fakhoury” School</i>	School Director & 1 Computer Teacher, 1 Parent, 2 Students	<i>2/12/2009</i>
20	<i>Najwa Abou Zaki</i>	<i>“Wata el Msaytbeh” Elementary School</i>	School Director & 1 Science Teacher, 3 Students	<i>2/12/2009</i>
21	<i>Fatima Joumaa</i>	<i>“Ras el Nabeh 2” School for Girls</i>	School Director & 1 Social Worker, 1 Student	<i>2/12/2009</i>
22	<i>Randa El Bourjawai</i>	<i>“El Basta1” School for Boys</i>	School Director	<i>7/12/2009</i>
23	<i>Samira El Debes</i>	<i>“Zouk Mosbeh” School</i>	School Director & 1 Social Worker, 1 English Teacher, 2 Students	<i>25/11/09</i>

24	<i>Basima Sourour</i>	<i>"Sed el Baoushrieh" Intermediate School for Girls</i>	School Director & 1 Science Teacher	25/11/09
25	<i>Sultan Abou El Hessen</i>	<i>"Kobayeh" Intermediate School</i>	School Director & 1 Social Worker, 3 Students	7/12/2009
26	<i>Bassam Edwan</i>	<i>"Borj Hamoud 2" Intermediate School</i>	School Director	7/12/2009
27	<i>Layla El Mofdi</i>	<i>"Mrah Sraj" Intermediate School</i>	School Director & 1 Social Worker, 2 Students	10/12/2009
28	<i>Najib Chahin</i>	<i>"Chekka" Intermediate School</i>	School Director & 1 Social Worker, 1 Parent	11/12/2009
29	<i>Estfan Atiyeh</i>	<i>"Batroun" Mixed School</i>	School Director	10/12/2009
30	<i>Souheil Serhan</i>	<i>"Bterram Khalil Salem" Secondary School</i>	School Director	11/12/2009