

On the SPOT

**NEWSLETTER
August 2006**

1. Middle East

Lebanon: Order of Malta sets up mobile medical teams and distributes 6.5 tons of medical drugs

The Lebanese Association of the Order of Malta sets up three mobile medical teams in the destroyed areas in South Lebanon and distributes 6.5 tons of urgently needed drugs. A four man team of Malteser International visited six of the ten health centers run by the Order of Malta and examined the situation of the returning population in South Lebanon, the southern suburbs of Beirut and the Bekaa valley from 18 to 26 August. Three health centers in South Lebanon have been damaged during the war, one of them is completely destroyed.



The mobile teams will operate in the villages around Marjayoun, Siddikine and Bent Jbail. In that region 83 percent of the health facilities are not working any more according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Each of the teams consists of a doctor, a nurse, a social worker, a psychologist and a driver. The drugs and material like wheelchairs and hospital beds have been collected with the help of the French Association. The international network of the Order of Malta has donated more than 200,000 Euros.

The reports, photos and press releases about the work in Lebanon are published on the Malteser International website. Please click here:
http://www.malteser.de/61.Malteser_International/en/61.02.News_Press/61.02.03.Downloads/documents.htm

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2. Africa

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Malteser International fights pest epidemic

With a special program Malteser International wants to prevent a pest epidemic in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. “We fear a massive epidemic, if we do not immediately treat the sick people, inform the population of the risks and fight the vectors, the flees of rodents”, Dr. Alfred Kinzelbach, coordinator for the region of the Great Lakes, explains.



“The occurrence of the extremely epidemic pneumonic plague additionally alerts us”, Kinzelbach points out. In a small area close to Lake Albert 100 people died in the past four months due to this disease. With the new program, Malteser International expands its work to this region. The bubonic plague, a less easily contagious disease – the “Black Death” of the Middle Ages – was never completely eradicated in the Congo. Between 100 and 160 cases and about ten deaths are registered by Malteser International each month.

Malteser International trains the staff of the health care centers in the district of Mahagi, implements an early warning system and informs the population of prevention, insect control and hygiene. “Traditional customs like the joint washing of corpses mean a very high danger of infection,” Kinzelbach explains. “We have installed village committees who face these dangers”. The program is financed by the United Nations.

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International AIDS Conference: Malteser International cautions against the lack of medical staff

Malteser International alerts that the combat against AIDS could stagnate due to a lack of qualified medical staff. “The affected countries urgently have to train more doctors and nurses who can realize the time-consuming AIDS therapy and the psycho-social care”, Marie Theres Benner, health coordinator, demands. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) at least four million additional jobs have to be created which will cost more than seven billion dollar. “At the end of the year 2006, about two million people infected with HIV will be treated with antiretroviral drugs. Till the year 2010 this number will rise to about nine million. Specialized staff, however, is missing even now”, Benner points out.

In the slums of the Kenyan capital Nairobi where Malteser International is running a health care project in a difficult social environment, in 2006 - compared to the year 2005 - the organization is going to double the number of treatments with antiretroviral drugs for people infected with HIV. “More than 15 percent of the people living in the slums are infected. We have to recognize more and more outbreaks of AIDS. Every month, we have to treat an increasing number of patients”, Benner explains. The Kenyan government has realized the challenge and is thus going to employ another 3,800 additional nurses.

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3. Asia

Afghanistan: British and Australian Associations of the Order of Malta support income generating measures for women

The British and Australian Associations of the Order support Malteser International's work in Afghanistan with a donation of 10,000 Euros. This money helps 20 women in the province of Logar to take part in a course on the production of tomato paste. They get also trained in health and hygiene issues.

The project runs for three months and is coordinated by the office in Kabul. The aim of the project is the implementation of long-term structures for income generation. Parts of the donation are also used for the support of a hospital in the province of Wardak.



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Cambodia: Community-based health insurance – a pilot project

Malteser International and its local partner organization, the Cambodian Health and Human Rights Alliance, implement a groundbreaking pilot project: a community-based health insurance in the north-west of Cambodia. The people in this region are very poor and many cannot afford the medical costs which are already quite low.



Malteser International's concept advances existing local structures. Most of the villages have burial funds which are financed by the villagers. These funds are expanded to health insurance funds which are administered by elected members of the community. The responsible committees make agreements with health centers. Thus insurants are treated in the centers for free. At the end of each month the health insurance fund pays for the treatments. The health centers are obliged to offer a 24 hours service and to meet certain standards.

Since the start of the project, more and more patients have been visiting the health centers. As higher numbers of patients correspond with higher salaries for the doctors and nurses, the insurance project is widely accepted within the health centers. At the moment, the local insurances are financially supported by Malteser International, with funds from the German Government but in the course of the duration independence and thus financial sustainability are aimed at.

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India I: Primary school in tsunami affected village inaugurated - an important step back to normalcy

Project advisor Christian Frost reports:

“It is so good that you are here”, Father Romance told me when I arrived for the school inauguration ceremony. It was not easy to talk since the welcome at the site of the school was overwhelming: A big crowd assembled to welcome us and bands were playing. Father Romance is the Director of Malteser International's partner organization ‘Quilon Social Service Society’ (QSSS) which implemented the school project.



During the inauguration both the Bishop of Quilon and the Minister for Food and Civil Supplies expressed their appreciation regarding Malteser International's long-term commitment in India. Moreover, the Bishop explained the importance of regularly provided education as a fundamental step back to normalcy.

In the small coastal village Alapadd, 175 people lost their lives when the tsunami hit, more than 3,000 houses were destroyed. Fishing equipment and other livelihood

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sources were totally devastated. The tsunami destroyed the foundation of the school building, washed large parts of it completely away and hence was declared unsafe by the local government. The remains of the school were initially used as a relief camp in which more than 2,000 persons were catered. From January to March 2005, the school functioned in the church of the village only, as well as in temporary sheds made of coconut leaves. “Classes could only be held shift-wise and not simultaneously”, Miss. Thomas, headmistress of the school, told me. “We never thought about having a complete school building again”, she added.

Computer facilities and the new library are the “most exciting” things in the opinion of Subin and Viban, two of the 126 students, nine years old. They along with their families were displaced after the tsunami and forced to live under camp conditions for a long time.

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India II: Preschool education in earthquake affected areas of Gujarat

When working in housing rehabilitation in post earthquake Gujarat, Malteser International and its partner organization ‘St. Xavier’s Non-Formal Education Society’ (SXNFES) came to learn about the harsh living conditions under which the tribal communities in the area were suffering. As landless laborers systematically discriminated against through the prevailing rigid caste system in a semi-desert area, families regularly face mistreatment, food shortage, and have virtually no access to any public infrastructure. Illiteracy is extremely high. One of the reasons is the discrimination against the children in public schools. As a consequence, Malteser International started a preschool program for 1,200 tribal children in 60 villages. 60 preschool teachers were trained over the course of three years and a total of over 1,600 children have so far participated in daily preschool classes where they learn to develop their cognitive and motor skills as well as their self-esteem.

Much has been achieved so far: the children who have passed the preschool education are registered in elementary schools and so far show a much better persistence and results than before. Illiterate parents have been made aware of the value of formal education.

Starting on 1 August, a new project phase of three years has been agreed with SXNFES giving fresh funding to the tune of 300,000 Euro. The aim of the prolonged activity is now to put the management of the 60 preschools to the hands of the community and to enlarge the scope of activity to older school drop-outs by running youth groups and summer camps, enrolment campaigns and linking the drop-outs to government schemes for non-formal literacy.

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Sri Lanka: Football program temporarily stopped due to escalating fights and fears of a new civil war

Malteser International and FC Bayern Hilfe e.V. – the charity branch of FC Bayern Munich - temporarily stop the program “Reconciliation by football activities” in the district of Trincomalee due to the escalating violence in the north-east of Sri Lanka. The program was meant to start in the mid of August, but as the security situation continuously worsens, Malteser International decided to reschedule it.

Constituents of the reconciliation program are the foundation of football clubs for youths, the allocation of football grounds, equipment and coaches as well as the construction of a football stadium. The integration of football activities into the school curricula is planned as well. “We want the program to contribute to the mutual understanding and tolerance of youths of different ethnic groups”, Dr Jürgen Clemens, desk officer Sri Lanka, points out. “As a result of the ethnic conflicts, young people were not allowed to do sports. We want to change this.”



Another conciliation project close to Galle in the south-west of Sri Lanka is not at risk. In this project children and teenagers in youth clubs learn how to deal with each other peacefully. They come from three different communities of which one had to be resettled due to the tsunami.

Further information:

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4. America

Mexico: Tortilla factory opened for the victims of Hurricane Stan

Oswaldo Marcenaro, project coordinator in the United States, participated in the opening ceremony and reports:

From Mexico City our group traveled 1,110 kilometers to the city of Tapachulas which lies in the state Chiapas on the border of Mexico and Guatemala for a special event. Our group was made up by representatives of the Order of Malta, the Mexican Association and Malteser International. Once in Tapachulas we met with the Bishop who accompanied us the rest of the way. We then traveled 2,500 meters by car to the top of the mountains. It is important to note that nine months after Hurricane Stan devastated this area the mountain roads were still in bad shape and it took us three hours.



Our destination was a small town of 300 people called Benito Juarez. This quiet mountain top community was alive with excitement on 28 July. The people had gathered to celebrate the official opening of a new building and what it contained inside. For you see the building holds something very important to the community, something that is a natural and life giving part of their world. What the building contains inside its white concrete walls is a new tortilla maker; a tortilla maker that will produce all three traditional sizes of tortillas.

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A mass was held to bless this project. After the mass a ribbon cutting ceremony was held. We all went in side and the machine was fired up and started to produce tortillas. A plaque was presented to the Bishop; it will be placed on the outside of the building. We all then gathered for lunch of local food and of course fresh made tortillas.

Members of the community will receive an instruction on how to correctly operate the machine, the different ways to refine the corn and how to fortify the dough with nutrients. The tortilla facility will service 18 surrounding communities. The corn producers will sell their corn to the tortilla facility and in turn produce tortillas for the community to buy. This will help establish a cooperative that meets the needs of the community.

Further information:

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5. Staff

Staff particulars

The French nurse **Sandrine Debruyne** began to work on **Sumatra, Indonesia** on 12 August.

On 1 August **George Elson** from Great Britain started his work as the new program coordinator for **Yei, Sudan**.

On the same day **Dr. Bernward Hammel** left Germany to work as a physician in the project for the victims of the earthquake on **Java, Indonesia**.

At the end of August **Verena Honermann**, a former intern in the Headquarters in Cologne, became the new project assistant in **Galle, Sri Lanka**.

Dr. Wolfram Jatsch from Germany started his new job as a physician in the refugee camps of **Mae Sariang, Thailand**, on 1 August.

On 15 August **Dr. Ahmed Salahuddin** from Bangladesh began to work as a physician on **Sumatra, Indonesia**.

Ingo Radtke

Petra Ipp

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