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al-janoub

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**UNIFIL**  
magazine

# youthful Perspective



# He died so we could live



As Al Janoub went to print, UNIFIL was struck by a tragedy. Warrant Officer Stefaan Vanpeteghem, serving in UNIFIL's Belgian Battalion (BELUBATT), was killed in an explosion while on a mission to neutralize unexploded ordnance near Aytaroun on **3 September**.

Married, with two daughters aged seven and nine years, Stefaan was serving in the Belgian Army since 1989. In 2004 he joined the specialised Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) unit located in the small town of Poelkapelle in the Belgian province of West Flanders. His life's mission was defined: to save the world from some of man's deadliest creations.

It was on this mission that three months ago Stefaan arrived in Lebanon.

As Adjutant, he led the three-member EOD Section of BELUBATT, working together

with the battalion's de-miners and on call. Whenever the de-miners would find something suspected to be a mine, bomb, cluster or other munition, Stefaan and his men would be there to remove the device, neutralize or destroy it.

His Section was, and remains, a vital asset for UNIFIL. If, for example, a farmer found a munition and reported it to UNIFIL, the EOD Section would be called to visit the location and deal with the problem.

During his three months in south Lebanon, Stefaan and his team had found dozens of deadly explosive devices that could have killed or maimed innocent people. But there was one too many that remained, lurking to kill the saviour himself.

Warrant Officer Stefaan Vanpeteghem, 35 years old, died in the line of duty.

# Back to the future

In its last issue *Al Janoub* celebrated three decades of UNIFIL's foundation. Producing the special edition -with gracious contributions from stalwarts, Lebanese as well as United Nations officials, who had significant associations with the mission- was like re-living the chequered history of south Lebanon. As we delved into the annals to reconstruct an account of UNIFIL since 1978, the significant fact that stood out was the strong humanitarian bond between peacekeepers and the people of south Lebanon that has endured through all of the 30 years of war and peace.

Having catalogued its historical moorings, we now explore this unique humanitarian bond from the futuristic perspective. This issue of *Al-Janoub* is a tribute to the future, the youth, of south Lebanon in their vibrant interface with UNIFIL peacekeepers.

What better way to explore this relationship than through the pen of the youth themselves. We invited visiting school students from south Lebanon to write about their impressions on a day they spent with UNIFIL in Naqoura. Our own impression of them was of a confident generation, poised to define their own destiny with an equanimity that defies the grim realities of their recent past. The 'photo feature' captures some images of the day.

In working with children and young people, the driving force among world organizations is UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund. Its Lebanon Representative Roberto Laurenti paints the broader picture on youth concerns that transcend geography. Through strategic partnerships and youth participation, hallmarks of UNICEF's approach, concrete improvements are being affected in the lives of children and women in the south, as much as in other parts of the country.

Psycho-social support for children affected by conflict in south Lebanon is an important aspect of the partnership between UNICEF and UNIFIL, joined by multiple international and local organisations. The result is the Bent Jbeil Community Centre, the first of its kind, as Samer Haydar of the NGO 'Intersos', the lead implementing partner, outlines. This coming

together to alleviate the psychological trauma of war through creative engagement of children and the elderly alike, extols the virtue of pooling civil society and governmental resources for the common good.

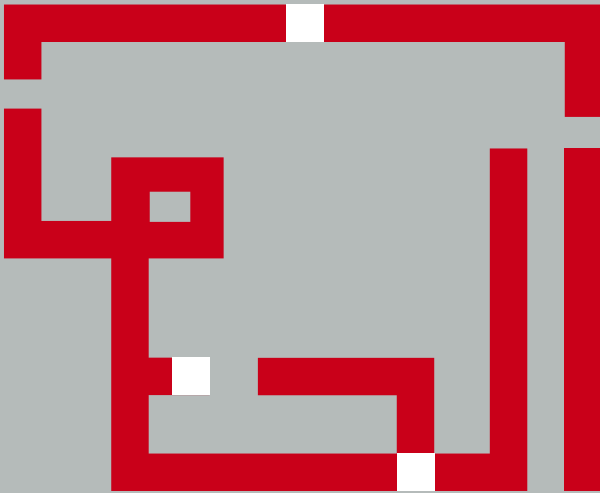
Imad Abed Razek from the NGO 'Nabaa' that partnered UNIFIL in a youth enabling project in five villages of south Lebanon, provides an interesting account of young aspirations, realized with amazing alacrity and enterprise. A stellar example of how a little guidance can "club" youthful energy, imagination and voluntariness toward tangible benefits for society.

Not to be left behind, UNIFIL's Indonesian peacekeepers take us on a "smart" learning curve – a national innovation applied in 11 villages of south Lebanon to promote child education through fun learning experiences designed to stimulate the young minds.

UNIFIL's long association with the people of south Lebanon positively reflects in the Opinion piece from Bilal Sharara, Secretary General for Foreign Affairs in the Lebanese Parliament. And Mayor Hussein Saad of Teir Debba too has his 'Word' on it. The sensitivity to community needs that underlies the relationship is expounded in the article on Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC).

This issue is primarily about the youth's perspective on UNIFIL and how it corresponds to their sense of the future. The common strand can be discerned in myriad hues of humanity.

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### Disclaimer

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**Note:** Since the June special issue of Al-Janoub did not feature the 'Chronicle', this edition covers events for the period March to August 2008.

## UNIFIL turns 30



On 19 March chroniclers recorded an important landmark in the history of UNIFIL as the peacekeeping mission completed 30 years of its establishment under UN Security Council resolution 425 in 1978. To mark the occasion, a ceremony was held at the Cenotaph in UNIFIL Headquarters in Naqoura, where the peacekeepers were joined by representatives from

the Lebanese government and armed forces, the diplomatic community, local mayors and community officials, as well as the media.

Addressing the gathering, Force Commander Major-General Graziano stressed the full commitment of UNIFIL to perform its duties in close cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces: "In performing

our mission, we are extremely determined not only because of our capabilities but also because we are supported by the people of the south who know we are here to assist in ensuring security and stability for them."

A photo and video exhibition was organized to illustrate the three decades of UNIFIL's presence in south Lebanon.

## New Deputy Force Commander

On 20 March UNIFIL received a new Deputy Force Commander. Brigadier-General Apurba Kumar Bardalai replaced his compatriot from the Indian Army Brigadier-General Jai Prakash Nehra, who left UNIFIL after more than two years of dedicated service in the mission.

Brigadier-General Bardalai was commissioned as an Infantry Officer after graduating from the National Defence Academy in June 1977. An alumnus of the Defence Service Staff College, Wellington, he has held

several important command and staff assignments in operational areas.

During 1991 -92, he served as a Military Observer in the United Nations Verification Mission in Angola. After completing the Higher Command Course at the Army War College, he served as Director of UN Peacekeeping at the Indian Army Headquarters. A researcher and contributor to UN publications, seminars and other forums, he has authored a book: 'Changing Security Scenario: Implications for UN peacekeeping'.



## Mine Action Day



On 4 April, on the occasion of the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, UNIFIL organised several mine risk education sessions and other activities across south Lebanon, in order to raise awareness about the problem and inform on preventive measures against the threat posed by mines and cluster bombs in the area.

Since the end of the 2006 conflict unexploded ordnance and cluster munitions clearance combined have led to 27 civilian fatalities and 234 civilian injuries, as well as 14 mine clearance fatalities (including two UNIFIL peacekeeper) and 39 mine clearance injuries.

Until the end of August 2008, UNIFIL demining teams had cleared more than 5.2 million square metres of affected land and destroyed more than 30,500 UXOs and mines in south Lebanon.

## 60 years of peacekeeping

On 29 May, the International Day of UN Peacekeepers, UNIFIL celebrated 60 years of peacekeeping operations by the United Nations.

Peacekeepers representing the 26 different national contingents of UNIFIL (28 countries as of today) attended a ceremony held at the Mission headquarters in Naqoura.

Today, the United Nations has more than 110,000 men and women deployed in conflict zones around the world coming from nearly 120 countries. Of those



## Watering the fields of Khiam



On 1 July a UNIFIL project was completed in Khiam with the inauguration of a channel for irrigation of agricultural fields.

The purpose of the project was to channel the Ain Abu Muzrab spring water and connect it through the Al Massil spring with the Dardara source. This newly constructed channel will not only prevent damage caused during the winter by rainwater to the nearby fields but will also supply the irrigation system in the area.

The project was identified in consultation with the municipal authorities as one of the infrastructure-related priorities for the area.

peacekeepers around 13,000 are serving with UNIFIL, including about 1,500 naval personnel of the UNIFIL

Maritime Task Force, and supported by over 1,000 civilian international and local staff.

In these years, as many as 274 UNIFIL peacekeepers have laid down their lives in the service of peace in south Lebanon.

## For the children of Chebaa



On 28 June the Public Elementary School in Chebaa village enhanced its infrastructure with refurbishment of the schoolyard as well as the staircases with the help of UNIFIL.

The project initiated on the request of the school authorities, was sponsored by UNIFIL.

To celebrate its new facilities, the school organized an inaugural ceremony with

the active participation of its students and the local community. The event was attended by over 200 people including the Mayor of Chebaa, Member of Parliament Kassem Hashem as well as religious leaders.

The rehabilitation of the school's courtyard will directly benefit the 260 students of the school including the children with specific needs.

The school was located in a dilapidated old building away from the centre of town. The poor state of infrastructure posed safety hazard for students and teachers. The rehabilitation will contribute to the development of the educational facility in Chebaa in a more secure environment.

## The foot that came from Jaipur

During July, UNIFIL's Indian Battalion held a "Jaipur Foot" clinic at its base in Ebel Es Saqi for providing artificial limbs to the handicapped.

The clinic was run by a team of eight experts from the 'Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti' (BMVSS), the world's largest limb fitting society based in the Indian city of Jaipur. As many as 141 Lebanese nationals who had been injured in mine or cluster bomb explosions were provided with foot, hand and polio calipers.

The clinic is the fourth of its kind held in south Lebanon. The first such camp was held in January 2006. Since then a total of 366 patients have benefited from the 'Jaipur Foot' clinics.

### Soccer in Adshit Al Quasayr



In July, the village of Adshit Al Quasayr got its own mini soccer field where the village youth could have their space for recreational and physical activities.

The project undertaken by UNIFIL, involved the rehabilitation of an existing

yard in the vicinity of the municipality.

It required levelling and strengthening of the ground, resurfacing it with a layer of artificial grass and providing a fence with metal poles and wire mesh. The work took three months to complete.

### A road to Beit Leif

On 6 July, UNIFIL inaugurated a road in Beit Leif that had been freshly paved with UNIFIL funding.

This customary route for local movements had been in a state of disrepair causing much inconvenience to the people. As such, UNIFIL

undertook to renovate the road.

At the inaugural site, a plaque with Lebanese and United Nations logos was put up by the Municipality of Beit Leif as a mark of appreciation for UNIFIL's assistance to the project.

### Joining festivities in Tyre



On 26 July, as the 'South and Tyre festival' entered its second day, the organizers dedicated a cultural evening to UNIFIL.

Peacekeepers from Ghana performed their traditional cultural dances while the Koreans put up a show of their martial arts and national dance. In the framework of mine awareness the Italian contingent gave a demonstration of their demining activities in the south of Lebanon.

Among the dignitaries who witnessed the evening's performances were the Head of the National Committee for the South and Tyre festivals

Randa Berri, UNIFIL Force Commander Major-General Claudio Graziano and Head of the Tyre Union of Municipalities Abdel Mohsen al-Husseini.

At the end of the evening, Mrs. Berri presented honorary shields to Major-General Graziano and commanders of the participating UNIFIL contingents.

Addressing the gathering, UNIFIL Force Commander stressed the importance of such activities that "reinforce cultural and humanitarian relations between UNIFIL and the people of south Lebanon and reflect the true feeling of the locals, that they are living in peace and security".

### Maritime Task Force changes Command



Major-General Graziano addressing the ceremony  
Inset: Rear Admirals Di Biase (left) and Hinden

On 1 September, the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force currently led by the European Maritime Force (EUROMARFOR) handed over the command from Rear Admiral Ruggiero Di Biase of Italy to Rear Admiral Alain Hinden of France (EUROMARFOR).

The ceremony took place aboard the flagship Scirocco and was attended among others by UNIFIL Force Commander Major-General Claudio Graziano, EUROMARFOR Commander Vice Admiral Giuseppe Lertora, senior Lebanese Armed Forces officers and diplomatic

representatives from countries contributing troops to UNIFIL.

Since the start of its operations on 15 October 2006, MTF has hailed around 18,000 ships and referred more than 150 suspicious vessels to the Lebanese authorities for further inspection.

So far 12 countries have contributed naval units to the MTF: Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and Turkey. EUROMARFOR has been part of the MTF since 29 February 2008.

# The first of its kind in south Lebanon

As yet another round of destruction and ruin hit south Lebanon recently, people of all age groups were affected. However, as always children remain the ultimate victims of war. The 2006 war left them vulnerable to cluster bombs and unexploded ordnance. Their movements were severely restricted and their playgrounds or leisure centres destroyed.



UNIFIL's Office of Civil Affairs played a crucial role in providing funding for the community centre and in bringing civil society organizations closer to the youth and the children.

International organizations and local authorities came together to try and fill this gap created by the bombs and draw a smile on the faces of those who mourned their loved ones or who lost their means of livelihood. These efforts may not compensate for all that was lost, but can create a better life and bring relief to the people, according to Eva Farhat, Coordinator for an Italian organization [Intersos] working in Bent Jbeil.

Bent Jbeil has been a focus of attention from a large number of NGOs and international organizations that have instituted programs designed to help in the recovery of destroyed areas. To avoid duplication and better coordinate their efforts, the Italian organization 'Intersos' brought together all the NGOs working in Bent Jbeil under a 'Steering Committee' supervised by the municipality.

The Steering Committee includes the Bent Jbeil municipality, Intersos, Risala Islamic Scout, Imam Mahdi Scout, Lebanese Scout (St Gerges in Rmeych), the school for children with special needs in Ayta Elchaab, as well as the Bent Jbeil chapters of 'The Cultural Movement', 'Developmental Services Centre', the Red Cross Social Services Section, UNDP, the Association

for Lebanese Women and CLAC [Centre de Lecture et d'Animation Culturelle].

This led to the establishment of the first of its kind community centre in Bent Jbeil. UNIFIL's Office of Civil Affairs played a crucial role in providing funding for the community centre and in bringing civil society organizations closer to the youth and the children.

The opening ceremony was attended by the Qa'imaqam of Bent Jbeil Casa Ibrahim Darwish, Head of Bent Jbeil Municipality Aff Bazzi who also heads the Union of Municipalities in the area, Colonel Tiebo representing UNIFIL's Sector West Command, representatives of different municipalities, local and international NGOs as well as UN agencies such as UNICEF.

Ola Bazzi is one of the girls frequenting the community centre of Bent Jbeil. She believes that it is a social responsibility to address the psychological damages caused by conflict, which are known to reappear a year after the war. Through the community centre she hopes to contribute to child enabling and help deliver the children and all those affected by the tragedy from its consequences.

Director of the Intersos project financed by

UNICEF, Ayman Elrozz, highlights the variety of activities targeting all social groups including children, youth and the elderly, which he says is the essence of the project. Kosovo is one example where this method was applied to fill the religious gap between the Muslim and Christian communities through a range of common activities.

Hassan Jooni, Director of the Cultural Movement Centre in Bent Jbeil, a part of the Steering Committee, emphasizes the importance of activities in the community centre at a time when the country is going through an unprecedented struggle, particularly those that go beyond the Bent Jbeil Casa. Citing the Cultural Movement's support for the "Holy Mary" play held in Rmeych in memory of Francois El Hajj (Lebanese Army General who was assassinated recently), Jooni extols the general idea of such events.

The Steering Committee carries a message for Bent Jbeil's organizations: that they must work together to organize joint activities, towards the higher goal of a civil society united in the welfare of the people.

**Samer Haydar**  
Intersos National Coordinator





# A day with UNIFIL

“You have been invited to spend a day with UNIFIL in Naqoura.” The surprise announcement by our School Director filled us with nervous excitement...

Children are a vital subject of UNIFIL’s interface with the local population, whether in community events or school visits by peacekeepers who conduct a range of educational and recreational activities. But on 26 February, UNIFIL headquarters had a youthful interlude of a third kind. A group of 16 students, nine girls and seven boys from four different schools of south Lebanon, came to spend a day at the Naqoura base, not for any grand ceremony, but to participate in the routine daily activities of the mission.

The idea originated from the convictions of UNIFIL’s Civil Affairs Officer Rola Bzeih. As a resident of south Lebanon who grew up watching peacekeepers, Rola had always been curious about UNIFIL. Now being part of it, she sensed similar inquisitiveness about the mission among young students from the area. The best way to have them understand UNIFIL’s mandate and activities would be to get them direct exposure of the mission’s work.

Rola pursued her idea with some local school authorities. The School Directors- Mr. Mahmoud Ghazzal/Abbassiyeh Government High School, Mr. Hassan Ezzedine/Tyre Mixed Government High School, Mr. Hussein Chibli/Marouhine High School and Mr. Georges Shoufani/Rmaysh Government High School – responded positively to her invitation and agreed to send four students each to visit UNIFIL and then share their experiences back in school.

The enthusiasm of the visitors was palpable. By the end of the day they had turned into little ambassadors of peace eager to spread the message of UNIFIL in their schools and neighbourhoods. **Nada Al-Houssaini** from Abbassiyeh as well as the four students from Tyre -**Amira Schoceir, Somaya Moussa, Bilal Baroud and Ali Abu-Khalil**- wrote to ‘Al Janoub’ with separate accounts of their day with UNIFIL. Finding an amazing commonality in their narrations and the

sentiments expressed, we put together below excerpts from their writings...

“You have been invited to spend a day with UNIFIL in Naqoura.” The surprise announcement by our School Director filled us with nervous excitement: what on earth would we do there, we wondered. We were eager to find out.

As we got off our van at Naqoura to join a larger group of students from three other schools, the heart-warming reception immediately put us at ease. We were escorted into a conference room where our name cards were placed around a big u-shaped table. Two officers from Italy and Spain introduced us to UNIFIL’s activities.

From there we moved to the ITALAIR base where UNIFIL helicopter pilots briefed us on their mission and showed us inside a helicopter. Just then a helicopter approached for landing and out came the UNIFIL Force Commander Major General Claudio Graziano. He walked up to welcome us and we took photos with him.

It was then time for lunch at the Italian cafeteria where we were joined by several peacekeepers. We shared a special table with the Force Commander and had an enjoyable conversation with him.

After lunch we walked on a guided tour of Naqoura camp and came to the Polish

logistics base where the Italian security contingent had put up a display of their equipment such as night vision binoculars and flak jackets. We also got to enter armoured personnel carriers. The Polish soldiers then gave an impressive fire-fighting demonstration.

UNIFIL has been playing a very important role in trying to clear the southern Lebanese lands of mines and cluster bombs and the French contingent showed us how difficult and dangerous this job can be. They gave us a mine awareness lesson and did some demining demonstrations when we also handled some of the equipment.

From there we moved to see UNIFIL’s multimedia activities. The photographer showed us the use of digital photography while the video producer introduced us to the world of video production and editing.

The wrap-up session was with the Director of Political and Civil Affairs who talked to us about our experience of the day. To top it, a mock press conference was organised where we acted as journalists asking questions about UNIFIL that were answered by the Chief of Public Information.

Fond memories of this day will remain forever etched in our hearts, as will the special relationship we now share with UNIFIL peacekeepers.



■ Conferencing



■ Dressed to save



■ Lunch with Force Commander

## A Day with UNIFIL

On 26 February, a group of 16 students from four different schools of south Lebanon visited UNIFIL headquarters in Naqoura for 'A Day with UNIFIL' -ref. article on page 9.

On 25 April a similar visit was organised for a group of 20 disabled children in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs.

■ Heli pose





■ Ready to fly

The programme combined informative sessions on UNIFIL's mandate and activities with such thrilling experiences as getting inside helicopters and Armoured Personnel Carriers, lunch with the Force Commander, learning about film-making/editing, use of demining equipments and a live fire-fighting demonstration.

### Some images...



■ Fire fighting demo



■ Looking out an APC

■ Mine safety briefing



# Never too young to begin

“We finally have a place where we can come together, talk freely and plan all the projects we aspire for,” said Zaynab Mahdi, a Naqoura resident, during the inauguration of the Youth Club in Naqoura. The club was built by the NGO ‘Nabaa’ in cooperation with Naqoura Municipality and within the framework of the youth enabling project financed by UNIFIL.

“Besides teaching them how to draft and present small project proposals, the workshops have also shown the youth how to communicate better with the municipality.”



“We particularly benefited from the practical application of our ideas and problem solving exercises. We have gained in self confidence.”



The project covered the five southern villages of Rmeych, Alma El Chaab, Yarin, Naqoura and Dayr Qanun an Nahr, targeting 120 youth between 14 and 25 years of age during December 2007 to March 2008. The main goals of the project are to alleviate the problems and stress experienced by villagers, primarily the youth, and reinforcing their role in decision making and the daily activities within their local communities.

The youth were apprised of their rights and duties and introduced to communication and crisis management skills. They also got a glimpse of the social and developmental role that UNIFIL is playing in south Lebanon.

“We particularly benefited from the practical application of our ideas and problem solving exercises. We have gained in self confidence,” said young Ibrahim El Asaad from Yarin town. Magui Gabi Farah from Alma El Chaab considered the training as a foundation for the youth to play an effective role in their community.

The training workshops culminated in an exercise where participants had to list the problems facing their respective villages and then draft a funding project proposal for the most pressing need they identified. Each group came up with novel ways to address their unique local needs.

Wanting to have a say in community matters that concern them, Naqoura’s youth felt the need for a safe place where they could freely interact and strengthen their role in decision making. Hence the Youth Club of Naqoura.

Voluntary work and building youth capacity for a more effective role in society was the goal of the youth in Rmeych. Their project therefore mainly focused on better equipping their local Scouts that would in turn organize educational, social, environmental and artistic activities.

Scouts activities also interested the youth of Dayr Qanun an Nahr who decided to support the Scouts in their town with musical instruments and by forming a theatre group.

The group from Alma El Chaab chose sports. Their high school students come from neighbouring villages and belong to different confessional groups. Sports activities would enhance interactions among them.

In Yarin they felt sports would reduce delinquency and help bring the youth closer together. So they opted to equip their football team and the town playground.

The projects were easily executed

thanks to the active assistance of the municipalities, the Red Cross, local organizations and schools. They have also joined youth representatives to form a local committee that will follow up on the projects to ensure their continuity.

Maroun Amil from Rmeych said: “We learned how to draft a project proposal and we are now communicating with the municipality without inhibitions.”

The Deputy Chief of Yarin municipality expressed his satisfaction: “Besides teaching them how to draft and present small project proposals, the workshops have also shown the youth how to communicate better with the municipality.”

His counterpart from Naqoura municipality, Adnan Hamze, agreed. “This project brought the youth closer to the municipality,” he said, drawing attention to the temptations that distract the youth away from public service.

The benefits from almost all the projects extended beyond the immediate village or community to reach their neighbours. Some like Tura and Tayr Debba have requested similar projects for their youth.

**Imad Abed Razek - ‘Nabaa’**

# ‘Smart’ learning with fun



Tallusah is a quiet village in the hills of south Lebanon with about one thousand inhabitants. A hot summer day, with the men mostly away at work and the women and children indoors sheltering from the heat, the silence is broken by the hum of white UN vehicles approaching the village.



It is a group of peacekeepers from the UNIFIL Indonesian Battalion (INDOBATT) that the villagers are so familiar with. As the visitors make their way to the village meeting place and quietly go about converting it into an improvised playground, a sudden flurry of activity is generated with children running in from all directions to join the fun.

The visitors are not new to Tallusah and the children know precisely what to expect: a fun learning experience with lots of toys, books and multimedia games that come in a blue coloured ‘mystery’ van named the ‘Smart Car’.

“Hooray...it’s coming”, shouts six year old Fatima, clapping her hands. She and her friends enjoy playing with the Indonesian soldiers who have interesting educational games for them.

“We are very pleased and thankful for the presence of the Smart Car,” says Mrs. Tamam, as she escorts her daughter to the play area. She hopes for an internet connection in the ‘Smart Car’ that would greatly enhance the learning experience for

the children. “The internet connection will provide up-to-date information that would broaden their thoughts.”

Nine year old Sabrina enjoys reading, the joy evident in her beautiful blue eyes as they scan through the wide range of history and documentary books the car offers. “My friends and I wait for the blue car every week,” she says, “We like to spend time here after school.”

**The Smart Car provides a unique learning and recreational opportunity in a child friendly environment.**

The Smart Car has been designed to support a range of activities that are carried out by UNIFIL’s Indonesian Battalion in conjunction with other initiatives like First Aid lessons, medical and other assistance to the local communities.

“The Smart Car was initiated by the First Lady of Indonesia, Madam Ani

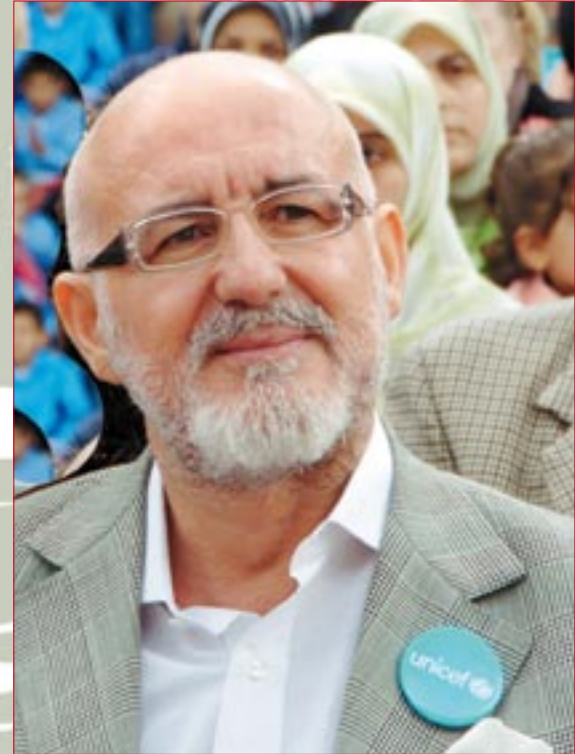
Yudhoyono, in order to motivate and facilitate the Lebanese children to study outside their school,” said Lt Col A. M. Putranto, the INDOBATT Commander, “It helps alleviate the trauma these children have suffered from during the recent war.”

A unique medium of interaction with local children, the Smart Car has a variety of games and toys combined with educational material and multimedia equipment such as television, DVD player, computer, Play Station, etc. The car covers 11 villages that fall within the INDOBATT area of responsibility, periodically visiting Ghandouriyah, Al Qantarrah, Adshit Al Qusayr, Et Taibe, Deir Sirriane, Al Aadaisse, Markabe, Bani Hayyan, Rabbat Tallame, Al Qusayr and Tallusah.

The Smart Car provides a unique learning and recreational opportunity in a child friendly environment. To date, the programme has reached about 1,500 children and youth.

**Captain Sandy Maulana Prakasa**  
UNIFIL Indonesian Battalion

# Working hard to keep the young



The Lebanon head of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) **Roberto Laurenti** has been in the country for five years now, working to ensure health, education, equality and protection for every child through the destructive interlude of the 2006 conflict.

In an interview for 'Al Janoub', he shared with **Neeraj Singh** his perspective on the concerns and aspirations of the young people of Lebanon, particularly in the context of UNICEF's work in south Lebanon. **Excerpts...**

## **Could you briefly explain the mission of UNICEF in Lebanon?**

Our main goal is to translate the principles listed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child into deeds. We work hand in hand with the government and NGO's to identify the priority areas where still there are vacuums or chronic inability to translate those principles into deeds. The impact of the war in Lebanon had direct and indirect consequences on vulnerable groups, especially children and women. UNICEF Lebanon has supported a number of key activities in the field of health, water and sanitation, education, protection and youth issues. One of the key challenges facing the children of Lebanon is that even as reconstruction progresses, they are living in the shadow of internal political instability.

## **How has UNICEF worked in south Lebanon through the 2006 conflict and after?**

UNICEF worked even during the occupation in the south. Since the end of the July 2006 war, in partnership with the government and NGOs, UNICEF continued working on improving the well-being of women and children in priority areas of health, water and sanitation, education and child protection including mine risk education. UNICEF inputs focused on the war affected area in the south but also on under-served districts in six Governorates in Lebanon.

**In the field of Health,** UNICEF interventions

focused on vaccinating every child in all districts in Lebanon.

## **In the field of Water and Sanitation:**

In partnership with the Lebanon Water Authorities, UNICEF supported the construction and rehabilitation of major water schemes destroyed during the conflict, including construction or rehabilitation of seven elevated water tanks giving back water to more than 380,000 people in addition to improving sanitary facilities and safe water supplies in 87 schools, and water community schemes in 12 villages.

**In the field of Education:** In partnership with the Ministry of Education, UNICEF is supporting the "Child Friendly School Initiative" in some 100-targeted schools through an integrated approach combining rehabilitation of schools, Health/ Nutrition and Hygiene education while supporting extra-curricula activities in literacy and remedial classes.

**In the field of Child Protection:** A priority has been to make available psychosocial support to children affected by war. It is easy to see a bridge that was destroyed, or a water tank bombarded. But you do not see so easily the damages that are inflicted emotionally and psychologically, especially on the children, from having lived through a series of trauma: being bombarded, displaced, finding relatives killed or handicapped, and so on.

It is important immediately to recreate the conditions for children to be able to express themselves, to try to mitigate the nefarious effects of what they had to experience.

## **How do you achieve this?**

We introduced 25 "child friendly spaces" here in the south (a concept introduced by UNICEF in Kosovo) where kids had access to basic services like education, health, recreation and psychosocial assistance. In fact recreation and psychosocial assistance go hand in hand. Through play, you provide the children an opportunity to find back some degree of normalcy whilst enabling the social workers to better identify those kids in need of more specialized assistance. We collaborated with a large number of NGOs to set up child friendly spaces in Tyre, Khiam, Marjayoun and elsewhere across south Lebanon. We also helped in the creation of Child Protection Networks reaching 71 villages (over 65,000 persons) and train on psycho-social support and conflict resolution.

## **And what about the schools?**

We did the 'Back to School' campaign all across Lebanon. According to government assessments, between 40 and 50 schools were completely destroyed during the war, while around 300 suffered partial damage. On the other hand, many families lost everything including also books. So we provided schools with 7,000 School-



Mr. Laurenti at Aansariyeh Public School in southern Lebanon to mark the children's return to school



Mineral water bottles designed for mine risk awareness campaign.

in-a-Box kits, each containing enough materials to run a classroom. At the same time we provided children 400,000 school bags with stationery distributed across the country so all children could return to school by October 2006, just two months after the war ended.

### What is your assessment of the progress made so far?

I have never experienced myself, both in the countries where I have served before and also where I come from, such a rapid response in overcoming the problems—the bridges, the roads, houses in the south, everything was fixed. Indeed, there was generous support of partners and countries, but without the determination of the Lebanese to overcome the adversities it would have been impossible to achieve this in such a short time. Of course scars remain; the destruction was such that it was humanly impossible to rebuild completely so soon, but the basic infrastructure was restored in record time.

Now for us it is important to better measure where the country really stands in terms of all social services. For this reason, under the patronage of the Prime Minister, we recently launched a multi-cluster survey to determine access to and effectiveness of social services and other development indicators that have an impact on the wellbeing of children.. This year's survey is particularly significant, as the sample size

of 16,000 households, will better capture the specific needs of families living in the most vulnerable communities. This will be the largest survey ever done in Lebanon and will help the policy makers and the social actors in this country to better tailor their policy to respond to the most urgent needs.

### What do you think are the priorities for the youth in Lebanon and particularly in the south?

In Lebanon youth have greatly suffered from the side effects of civil war and unrest which affected their immediate or future life. In addition, tolerance, education and citizenship (as opposed to confessional divide) transpire very strongly as the issues of fundamental concern to Lebanese adolescence and youth.

Unfortunately, all these factors contribute to growing disillusionment by young Lebanese who too often feel their place could be abroad and hence opt for migrating for career stability.

Aware of this very important aspect, UNICEF Lebanon country office and the first TV station LBCI are producing "Sawtna" or voices of youth, a unique TV programme of its kind not only in Lebanon but in the Arab region. Broadcasted twice a week on LBCI, the programme is produced by 50 youth, aged 16-20 years, reaching around 400,000 people. In the South we have

two groups, one in Maarake near Tyre and another in Saida. Of course the south group, and especially Maarake, are very concerned about post-conflict issues, such as mine risk education, peace and stability. But once you offer the kids the chance to vent their pre-occupations, they all ultimately speak the same language irrespective of what geographical region they come from.

### How can UNIFIL contribute to your work in south Lebanon?

We are fine tuning the good work we did together. Bent Jbeil community centre is an example where each of us, including the local authorities and civil society, contributed a little to achieve a bigger success. That is I think the way to go.

After the conflict UNICEF, like many other actors in the social arena, received substantial amount of resources. But now that the resources are diminishing, we need to be much more strategic in the way we use them. UNIFIL contributes a lot to re-establish normalcy. This is where if we can get together in co-sharing some of the needs that must be addressed.

Ultimately, the municipality is very important. We can provide the basic start-up resources to build-up a model of reference. This should then be sustained by the municipalities once they understand that this is in the best interest of their constituency.

# A tribute to UNIFIL



**"UNIFIL has done the impossible in minimizing suffering and damages... we continue to have good relations with UNIFIL based on friendly and humanitarian considerations."**

UNIFIL had no complaints about any disturbances or hindrances to its mission on account of the Amal Movement, which back then was practically in control of the area, both politically and militarily, due to the absence of the Lebanese State. The excellent cooperation between UNIFIL, the Amal Movement and the locals ensured that any incident or dispute was resolved within minutes just with one telephone call.

My friendship with my interlocutors in UNIFIL has since grown from strength to strength.

I remember [in the mid-1980s] having my morning coffee every Friday in the UNIFIL Office at Tyre. Here I would get my weekly gift of UN reports related to UNIFIL that helped me analyze information on the situation in the area, the implementation of UN resolution 425 and the deployment of the Lebanese Army. I would also carry messages to and from Minister Nabih Berri, who later became the Lebanese Parliament Speaker. Those messages pertained to UNIFIL's mission and the situation in its Area of Operations.

We cannot forget the humanitarian role played by UNIFIL, which has always been a sanctuary for the locals during periods of war and occupation, for issues related to their safety and medical well-being, social problems, or services for their villages.

We acknowledge that while UNIFIL with its limited powers cannot prevent the occurrence of wars and conflict, it has done the impossible in minimizing suffering and damages.

During long years of perseverance and patient suffering, which UNIFIL has witnessed, the Lebanese were able to reclaim their lands and liberate the occupied border area, except for Shebaa Farms and the Hills of Kfar Shouba. During those long years -30 years- UNIFIL itself suffered many casualties. We will always remember the sacrifice of those peacekeepers.

Later on, in 2006, UNIFIL started its mission in accordance with Resolution 1701. This renewed deployment followed a bloody war that caused much suffering in Lebanon, producing hundreds of victims and wounded. The infrastructure – transportation, telephone and water supply networks – was destroyed, in addition to the complete seizure of Beirut's airport and seaport operations.

All of Lebanon welcomed UN resolution 1701, particularly because it took into consideration Lebanon's demands that ended hostilities and provided a basis for us to work together with the United Nations with the aim to achieve a permanent ceasefire and lasting peace in the area.

Again, we continue to have good relations with UNIFIL based on friendly and humanitarian considerations. For example, it makes me very happy to

see residents taking language courses provided by certain UNIFIL battalions to enhance mutual understanding. I have also contributed to some of these programmes.

I had the honour to be a member of the Lebanese Committee for Tyre and South Lebanon Festival, which organized many activities in collaboration with, or especially for, UNIFIL. Among those was the Mass held at the square of Qana's Cave and the celebration on 26 July in which many Lebanese folkloric groups, and some UNIFIL groups, participated.

Today, as relations with UNIFIL continue within the framework of coordination, cultural exchange and personal friendship, I am sure that our endeavours will continue to strengthen the cultural relations in their various hues. We are confident about reclaiming Lebanese sovereignty over Shebaa Farms and the Hills of Kfar Shouba. We are also certain that UNIFIL will be successful in its mission to support the Lebanese army in order that the Lebanese State can assert its control over its territories.

UNIFIL will also be successful in guaranteeing security and regional stability, because the Lebanese have proved that forceful means will not make them succumb or accept any infringement on the security and sovereignty of their country.

We sadly remember UNIFIL's victims, and we trust that coordination between the locals, the Lebanese Army and UNIFIL, combined with political and security alertness, will prevent any occurrence of terrorist acts in UNIFIL's Area of Operations and in all Lebanese territories.

### **Bilal Sharara**

*Mr. Sharara, a resident of Bent Jbeil, is Secretary General for Foreign Affairs in the Lebanese Parliament.*





# Bonded in humanity

In the beginning of 1992 I came into close contact with UNIFIL, particularly its Media Office, for professional reasons in my capacity as a journalist. From that date on, a close relationship was established between myself and the UNIFIL team working from Tyre. Our relations were built on mutual respect, where sometimes a simple greeting was enough, as my knowledge of the English language is very basic.

I will not praise or glorify the role of UNIFIL, but several factual realities of UNIFIL's undertaking "paved the road to the hearts of the locals", an expression used by the UN. Those locals in their times of hardship have found the blue helmets, whether white or black skinned, by their side. This feeling, which we touched upon in our media coverage of events, manifested itself in soldiers escorting tobacco and olive farmers to their fields and providing help in moving their crops at a time when they were forbidden to visit their fields due to continuous Israeli shelling.

This is best described as "El Hashke" (sense of communal togetherness), a term frequently used by our locals, who know well how to return favours to soldiers coming from the far corners of the world and sharing with them the tragedies of war: sustaining many wounded and martyrs, sharing their food with refugees in the Fijian camp at Qana in 1996 and collecting the remains of victims in Merwahin, El Mansouri and other towns.

When one travels to another country, he counts the hours and days to finish his work and return home to rejoin his family and loved ones. But UN soldiers, who are no different in their emotions from others, shed tears when their mission in south Lebanon is complete and time comes to return home. This is not because they do not miss their families, but rather because they have to leave their second families who embraced them and afforded them their affection and protection, reaching the

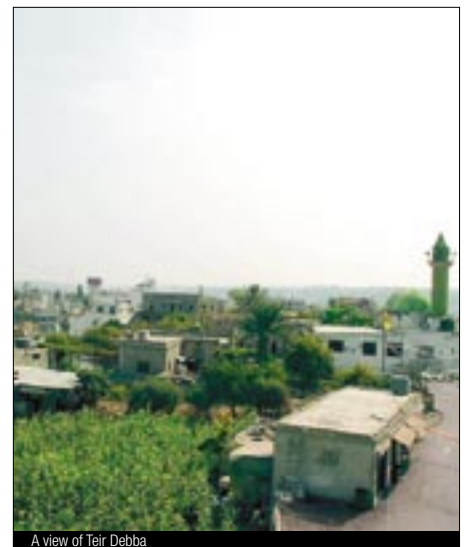
level of inter-marriages.

Four years ago, I was elected as a member of the Municipal Council of Teir Debba, located seven kilometres from the city of Tyre, comprising six thousand residents and providing a safe haven for its inhabitants.

In the aftermath of the July 2006 war, the reinforced UNIFIL forces arriving in south Lebanon under resolution 1701 commenced their efforts to assist in offsetting the impact of this war. Our town's share was a simple assistance provided by the Italian Forces, as they rehabilitated a Medical Dispensary inside our Municipal building.

One year later, coinciding with my election as Head of the Municipal Council, the South Korean troops came to participate under the UNIFIL Command. It was an honour for us to have its Headquarters at the entrance of our peaceful town. For one year now, we have had excellent relations with the officers and soldiers of the Korean battalion. The speed with which relations between the Koreans, our municipal council and the locals have been established was thanks partly to our wish to embrace those coming from the Far East to assist our country and to the support provided by the Koreans to our municipal council and subsequently to our town.

Numerous projects were undertaken by the Koreans under the leadership of the previous Commander Colonel Kim Ang. Our town benefited from the paving of three major and important roads, the establishment of a park for children,



A view of Teir Debba

the equipping of a computer class and other projects. This support continued with the arrival of new soldiers under the leadership of Colonel Kang Chan Ek who undertook important projects including a Taekwondo club, a support wall and equipment for the public school.

Indeed, our love and appreciation for the Korean peacekeepers is not based on this support, much needed though it is. Rather, our appreciation and gratefulness goes beyond that, to the relationship of brothers in humanity that ultimately defines our utmost love for UNIFIL and its soldiers.

**Hussein Saad**

*Journalist and Head of the Municipality of Teir Debba*

# Civil-Military Cooperation in southern Lebanon

There is a little girl called Rola who lives in the village of El Meri in southern Lebanon. She was an unfortunate victim of an accident last April when boiling water fell on her, causing severe burns to a large part of her body. She was in a critical state, running high temperatures, and her treatment was so expensive that the family could not afford it. UNIFIL came to her help.

Carlos, a cook at the Spanish compound, was so moved by the tragedy that he took it upon himself to save little Rola. On his initiative, peacekeepers serving in the Sector made a voluntary collection of over five thousand dollars to assist Rola. The money was sufficient to get her the immediate medical care she needed.

Spanish officials in Beirut approached Lebanese authorities to have the cost of her treatment covered by Lebanese Social Security. Once released from hospital, UNIFIL's Belgian military hospital authorised the provision of ambulatory services until her complete recovery.

Rola's case is just one example of how UNIFIL's Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) units are providing a humanitarian interface between the peacekeepers and the people of south Lebanon. It is the CIMIC spirit that generated a sense of solidarity for Rola among soldiers who had never seen her or heard about her.

Even as the CIMIC units in different UNIFIL battalions have multiplied efforts to extend all possible assistance to the people, the nature of CIMIC activities has taken varied forms. These emanate as much from individual or national humanitarian initiatives, as from UNIFIL's investment in humanitarian projects. Often UNIFIL uses even operational resources, such as engineering or demining assets, to address urgent needs of the local population.

CIMIC initiatives being need-driven, medical and veterinary care constitute an important element of it. In general terms, 30,409 persons have received treatment

in different medical camps held by UNIFIL during the last year. Veterinary assistance reached its peak coverage during the summer months of July and August 2007 when 2,131 animals were treated.

The assistance provided has expanded into such areas as social welfare, education and culture, as UNIFIL peacekeepers have proceeded to share their respective national customs and folklore with the Lebanese people. The multiple languages spoken by UN troops provide a unique opportunity for the people of south Lebanon to learn diverse languages. UNIFIL Battalions devise a number of attractive language programs and during the last year as many as 600 students have benefited from language courses in English, Spanish, French, Italian and Indonesian.

Computer classes have been held in 13 places with more than 200 students attending. Likewise Taekwondo, knitting and other skills have been taught across southern Lebanon.

UNIFIL's CIMIC and Civil Affairs office implement Quick Impact Projects designed to meet the most impending needs of communities. Care is taken to maintain proper balance in the investments made across the sectors within the overall resources available.

During June 2007 to June 2008, the Quick Impact Projects have addressed the following main areas of concern: education (3 projects), infrastructure (17 projects), water and sanitation (4 projects), health (1 project) and public services (3 Projects).

Rola's case is just one example of how UNIFIL's Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) units are providing a humanitarian interface between the peacekeepers and the people of south Lebanon.



Little Rola

Material support to communities has been provided by way of power generators, refurbishing of schools, reconstruction of municipal parks, provision of educational materials to schools, paving of damaged roads and so on.

Support to communities is provided in many other forms. For example, when in February an earthquake measuring 5.4 on the Richter scale shook south Lebanon, UNIFIL CIMIC promptly responded to the most severely affected locations of Shhur and Dirdgahyya, providing tents and beds to more than 150 persons.

You can count on us in times of need.

**CIMIC Team /UNIFIL Headquarters**

# The International Day of Peace: Human Rights & Peacekeeping



**UNIVERSAL  
DECLARATION  
OF HUMAN  
RIGHTS**

Dignity and justice for all of us

The International Day of Peace was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1981 for “commemorating and strengthening the ideals of peace within and among all nations and people”.

Twenty years later, the General Assembly set 21 September as the date to observe the occasion annually as a “day of global ceasefire and non-violence... through education and public awareness and to cooperate in the establishment of a global ceasefire”.

On 21 September, the International Day of Peace, I call on world leaders and peoples around the world to join forces against conflict, poverty and hunger, and for all human rights for all.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

This year, as we commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as the 60th anniversary of UN peacekeeping, the Day offers an opportunity to spotlight the crucial

relationship between peace and human rights, which are increasingly recognized as inseparable. In the aftermath of World War II, world leaders acknowledged that “disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts” and have prevented the “advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy... freedom from fear and want”.

Today, we are still struggling to achieve this vision. Too many conflicts, from wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to conflicts in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Darfur, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, cause unnecessary loss of life and have a devastating impact on the structures that maintain societies, such as education, health and justice systems and the maintenance of law and order.

Read more about the International Day of Peace and how you can contribute at [www.peaceday2008.org](http://www.peaceday2008.org)



21 September  
International  
Day of Peace



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