

Post-Withdrawal Priorities and Needs

South Lebanon Workshop

Ibl El-Saki: February 16, 2001

Organized and Prepared By
Information International SAL
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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

On May 24, 2000, Israel withdrew its forces from South Lebanon and parts of the Western Bekaa, ending 22 years of occupation. A stretch of land - the Shebaa Farms - on the slopes of Mount Hermon, where the Syrian, Israeli and Lebanese borders meet, remains the core of a territorial dispute and a source of tension. But, by and large, the South is no longer the flashpoint of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

However, the harsh reality of post-occupation social, economic and political conditions was quick to set in. More than two decades of neglect, systematic military confrontations and isolation have taken their toll on 830 square kilometers of Lebanese territory and its population. Meager government resources and the apparent reluctance of donor countries to contribute to the development of the South, perhaps discouraged by the Middle East's political uncertainty and the reluctance to deploy the army along the border, have impeded the aspired-for quick resuscitation of the area.

In the immediate aftermath of the Israeli withdrawal, Information International conducted "Opinion Poll: Attitudes, Perceptions, Expectations and Frustrations - Liberated Areas." The objective of the May 27-June 1, 2000, poll was to assess the population's perceptions of the political, social and economic conditions in the formerly occupied zone. A comprehensive follow-up survey was conducted in September-November 2000, to determine the needs and complaints of the resident population and those displaced. The research involved a village-by-village survey, producing profiles for the 114 southern localities vacated by Israel, door-to-door questionnaires for permanent residents and the displaced as well as separate polls of the youth and their expectations.

More recently, Information International, under the auspices of the Embassy of the Royal Netherlands, convened a workshop for opinion leaders in the South. It was held on February 16, 2001, at the Dana Hotel in Ebl es-Saqi and attended by nearly 200 people from all five cazas that were previously occupied. The result of a questionnaire presented to the participants indicated that 80 percent were permanent residents of the area.

The questionnaire, the discussions and the earlier surveys have underlined unwavering attachment of southerners to their land, and although the developmental needs are numerous, they are largely realistic, practical and modest. The main focus of the participants was the agriculture sector in all its aspects and related small industries that would help create jobs and make use of surplus local produce. But the area suffers from severe shortages in basic services, such as inadequate health and educational institutions, as well as a severely depleted infrastructure and distorted environment. The workshop participants focused their interventions on offering ideas for improving their income.

The "opinion leaders" included independent farmers, members of agricultural cooperatives, professionals - such as doctors, engineers and teachers - activists in civil societies, members of municipal councils and mukhtars, as well religious figures and representatives of government and quasi-government development and reconstruction institutions (Annex A).

Information International has compiled the findings of the post-war poll, the follow-up survey and the outcome of the more recent workshop in this report, which will hopefully be useful to those interested in the priorities and needs of a population yearning for social, political and economic reintegration.

Section Two: General Conditions

Before Israel's first incursion into Lebanon in March 1978, there were between 250,000 and 350,000 people residing in the area, which later became known as the occupation zone. Of those, only about 77,000 remained in their native villages and towns. Since the end of the occupation, only a fraction of the displaced - approximately 5,500 - have returned, largely because of the lack of incentives or the complications that accompany any relocation.

But despite the destitute conditions in the south, the surveys show that most of the adult population is averse to emigration. However, more than half of the younger generation (aged 15-24) is so inclined.

Southerners have very specific priorities for the post-occupation era and these can be summed up as: improved income and better education and healthcare.

Where the youth are concerned, the surveys show a significant lack of interest in social, cultural or sports activities. Only 1.7 percent have surfed the internet, for example.

Section Three: Services

The absence of post-high school educational institutions, the shortage in learning equipment, unqualified teachers and the disproportional distribution of schools are a common complaint in the south, where education is concerned.

Healthcare also is a problem, with government hospitals standing idle due to the lack of equipment and staff and clinics that are unable to handle even minor surgeries. A significant proportion of the population has no medical insurance.

Section Four: Infrastructure

Many housing units are still deprived of regular water supplies, power is erratic and there is no functional sewage network in most of the South, not only in the newly recovered villages and towns but also in neighboring areas.

The mismanagement of water resources, which is depriving farmers from a commodity they badly need for irrigation, is singled out as the most problematic component of the physical infrastructure.

In addition to the damage it has inflicted on the environment, the sanitation issue is posing a serious threat to the health of the population, with sewage often mixing with natural water resources and solid waste disposed in unscientific manners such as burning.

Section Five: Income and Spending Patterns

The surveys show that most of the southern population lives hand-to-mouth, with agriculture providing the main source of income. Another source is deposits sent by relatives abroad. There also are some who depend on liberal professions or small private businesses for their livelihood. The end of occupation stripped up to 10,000 individuals of their main source of revenue. Those had depended on employment in Israel, salaries paid by the Israeli occupiers to the militiamen or employees of the so-called Civil Administration and commercial dealings across the border.

Section Six: The Agriculture

Southerners are not short of ideas for improving their living conditions, but lack the financial means, the tools, the technical expertise and the infrastructure that would enable them to do so.

On the agricultural level, one of the population's main complaints is the mismanagement of natural water resources. They demand aquifers, dams, man-made lakes and reservoirs to collect water. The absence of such facilities, is discouraging the cultivation of land for which there would be no adequate irrigation.

Another high priority is finding markets for local produce, which is increasingly threatened by smuggling and sub-standard or non-existent collection, storage, packaging, processing and transportation facilities.

Landmines, a legacy of the military conflict, are an alarming hurdle to land cultivation. The absence of detailed maps identifying the areas where these ordinances are planted is complicating the arduous task of clearing the area.

Equipping and staffing government hospitals is necessary to help ease the problems the population faces in having to travel to Sidon or Nabatiyeh for hospitalization. Providing schools with qualified teachers and modern equipment, widening the range of courses offered by the Lebanese University's branches in Sidon and Nabatiyeh and establishing vocational institutions are other key demands.

Section Seven: Environment and Tourism

There is widespread confidence in the touristic potential of the border area among natives. To vitalize this sector, they propose constructing resorts and hotels, forestation, cleaning up the environment and the rehabilitation of archaeological sites. Construction of hotels and holiday resorts was highlighted as a viable option for creating jobs and curbing migration.

Section Eight: Agro-Industry

Other than olive oil, and to a much lesser extent honey production, there are no significant industries in the area. There is, however, a widespread demand for developing agro-industries to make use of surplus produce.

Section Nine: Politics

Despite the complexity of the problems in the South and the dire economic recession on the national level, there remains significant confidence in a change for the better among the population of the South, albeit not in the immediate future. There is a wide sense of disappointment over the perceived reluctance of the Lebanese government, foreign countries as well as local and international NGOs to help resuscitate the south in the aftermath of the Israeli withdrawal.

The isolation of the South during the years of occupation has enforced a yearning for a legitimate authority to care for the population. According to both the survey and the questionnaire presented at the workshop, respondents almost unanimously disagreed with the government's pretexts for not dispatching the Lebanese Army to the South.

Section Ten: Recommendations

After an overall review of the needs for the development of the South, this section is devoted to proposals that could help improve conditions in the short and medium terms.

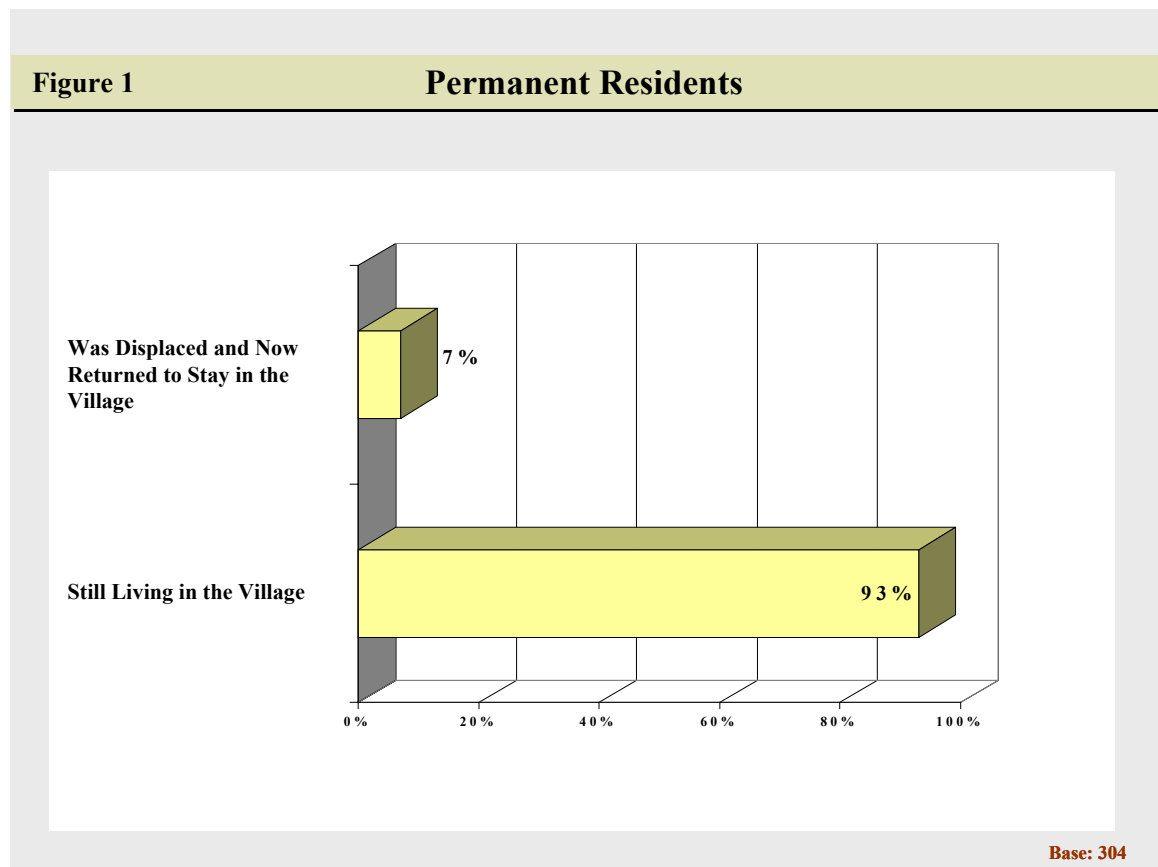
II. GENERAL CONDITIONS

A. Social and Geographic Characteristics

The former occupation zone covers 830 square kilometers, or 8 percent of Lebanese territories, stretching from the Mediterranean to the foothills of Mount Hermon. The 114 villages, towns and hamlets, which were held by the Israelis, currently house some 82,000 people, or less than a third of the estimated population in the 1960s. The first batches of emigrants began leaving the areas directly on the border with the first signs of tensions in 1968. But the bulk fled during the 1978 Israeli incursion and the more dramatic 1982 invasion.

Of those now classified as permanent residents, only seven percent have returned after the Israeli withdrawal. The lapse of more than two decades was long enough for the displaced population to establish roots in their new abode, whether in Lebanon or abroad (Figure 1, September 2000 survey).

The apparent reluctance to return may be attributed to many factors, at the forefront of which is the fear of venturing into the unknown in an unsettled Middle East political climate, as well as the lack of incentives, inadequate services and the financial and psychological burdens a relocation would entail.



B. Emigration

Despite the dire social and economic conditions - the culmination of years of systematic destruction and neglect - emigration does not seem to be a popular idea among the older residents. Of a sample of 760 households surveyed in September 2000, only 28.2 percent said they were contemplating leaving with the United States singled out as the preferred destination, and Europe a distant second (respectively 47.7 percent and 19.2 percent). Search for work is a high priority for those inclined to emigrate.

In sharp contrast, more than half of the youth (53 percent), said they were contemplating emigration, also citing employment and education as primary motives for their inclination (Figures 2 and 3, September 2000, survey).

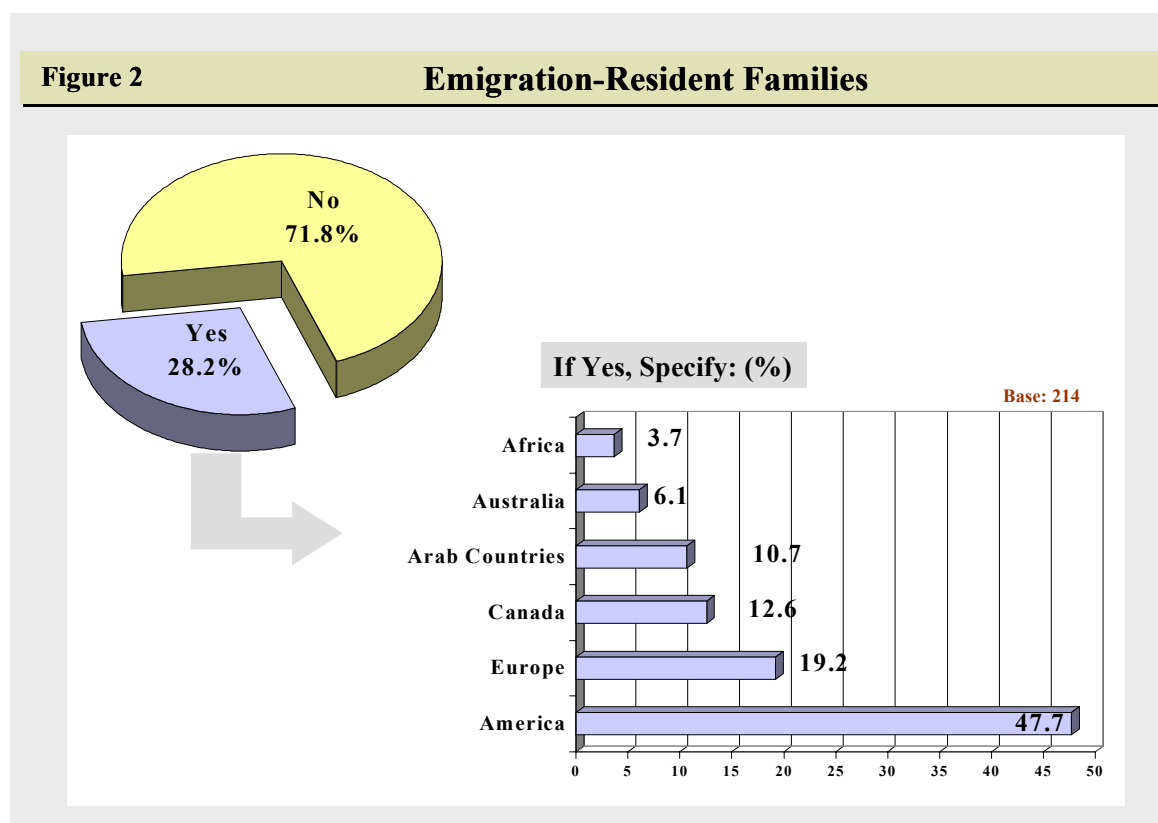
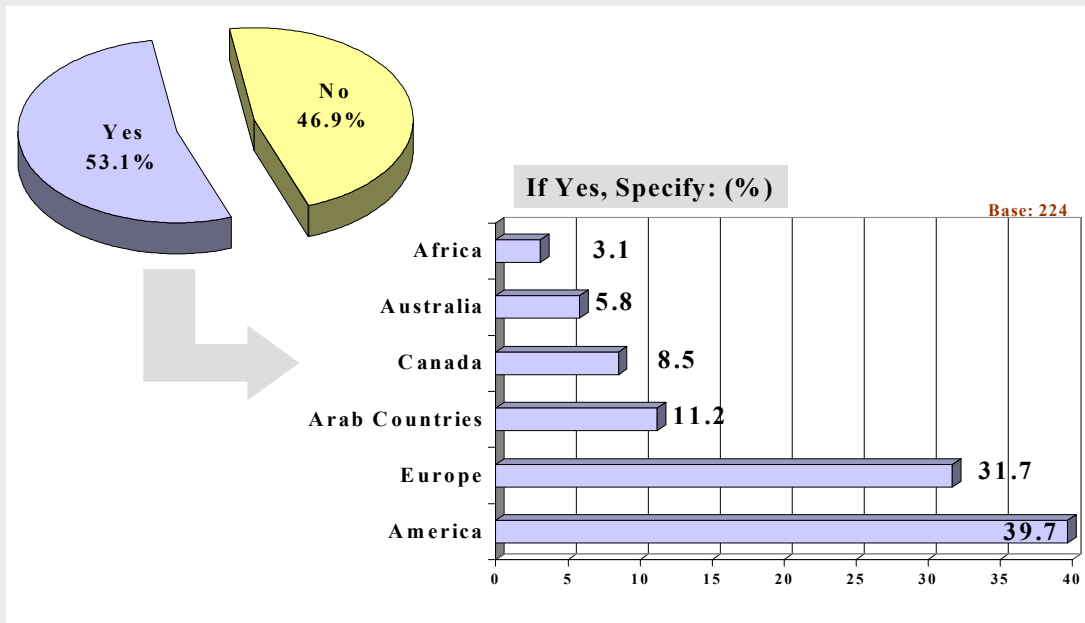


Figure 3

Emigration-Resident Youth



C. The Youth

There is an alarming lack of interest among the youth residing in the South in extracurricular activities and hobbies. Only 1.7 percent of surveyed respondents said they were familiar with the internet. This low proportion may be due to inadequate communications that existed during the occupation, a problem that has not yet been addressed. Outside the work or school hours, the youth spend their time helping other family members with routine chores or watching television. Only 6.9 percent are involved in sports, and reading is not on the agenda.

D. Housing

Perhaps what makes the bond of southerners to their motherland so strong is the fact that 99 percent of the population own property in their villages and towns, according to the surveys.

As such, housing does not seem to be a major problem for most southerners, even though the condition of some units fall below the acceptable standards and maintenance is almost non-existent.

A 1999 survey, sponsored by the Higher Relief Commission and the United Nations Development Fund, exposed some of the damage sustained during the military confrontations. In all five cazas of the former occupation zone, more than 2,300 units had been demolished beyond repair, 9,730 needed partial reconstruction and 12,047 were seriously damaged.

The frontline villages of Hanine, Rmeish, Dibil and Sojod were among the hardest hit. The Israelis leveled Hanine, displaced its 2,750 population and turned the village into a military barracks.

Technically, the Council for the South is in charge of compensating for the damages, but its coffers are empty and it has been unable to provide financial help for any post-withdrawal reconstruction effort.

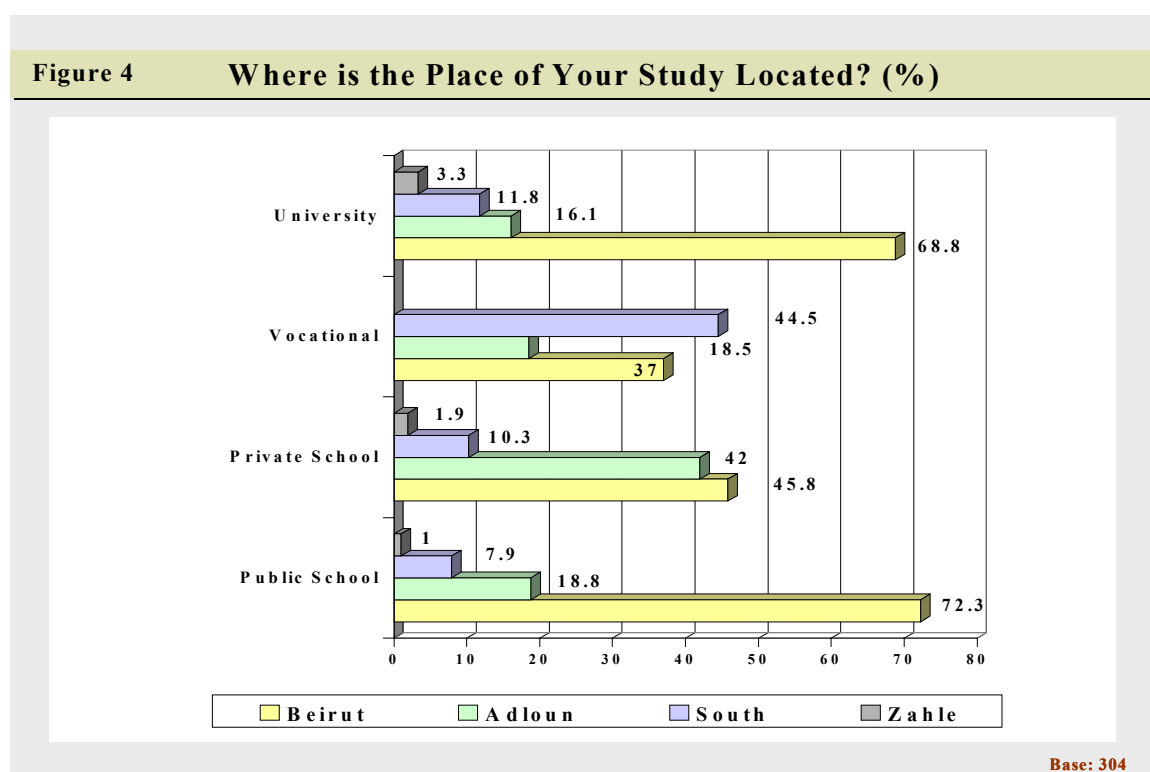
Hassan Faqih, a native of Kfar Tibnit and president of the Association of Tobacco Farmers, noted at the workshop that the government of Kuwait had offered to adopt a village and reconstruct it, suggesting that other countries could do the same. Faqih said that the damages caused by the military confrontations were not limited to the former occupation zone, but had also affected many villages along the demarcation line, insisting that Lebanon was unable to shoulder the responsibility of reconstruction on its own. "Israel is a problem that was created by the world and its countries have to contribute to solving this problem," he said.

III. SERVICES

A. Education

Education represents a serious challenge. There are no universities in the area, the closest being the Lebanese University's branches in Sidon and Nabatiyeh, which offer limited course options.

In Sidon, there are five departments - public health, humanities, literature, law and political science. The Nabatiyeh branch offers two majors, economic studies and business administration. A majority of 68.8 percent of university students commutes up to 60 or 70 kilometers to study in Beirut (Figure 4, September 2000 survey).



There are 115 schools in the area, of which 73 are public, 18 are missionary and 24 private. Half of the 18,426-strong student body attends public schools. The number of schools and the teacher-student ratios are commendable (six to one in public schools, and 14 to one in private schools), but the schools lack equipment and the qualified teachers needed to apply modern curricula. There are shortages of teachers for foreign languages, and schools in the cazas of Bint Jbeil and Marjayoun need major maintenance work. Most public schools have no heating, laboratories, libraries or computers for the use of students. Another problem stems from the improper geographic distribution of schools.

Maurice Dabaghi, the principal of Marjayoun's National Secondary School, a private institution, said that there was a surplus of teachers. "The shortages are in some areas of expertise. For example, we don't have qualified physical education trainers," he said.

Dabaghi suggested that volunteers from other countries could be sent to the South on rotational basis to fill the vacuum.

Hassan Raslan, a merchant from Markaba, said there was a dire need for vocational and technical academies, noting that there was only one such institution in Bint Jbeil. Also, he called for organizing “urgent training courses on information technology and handicrafts” to improve the skills of the youth and make housewives more productive.

Raslan said that expanding the Lebanese University branches in Nabatiyeh and Sidon would help curb migration from the South.

B. Health

Healthcare is another serious problem for residents. As this report was being written the fate of the Marjayoun Government Hospital was still unknown, with the facility accepting only extreme emergency cases. A Government Hospital constructed in Rashaya remained idle for years until its recent inauguration (March 2001) and the performance of its staff and adequacy of its equipment have not yet been tested.

Adib Farha, a businessman from Marjayoun, told participants in the workshop that he had earlier in the day met with President Emile Lahoud, who promised a swift solution to the saga of Marjayoun Hospital.

“In this area we are used to the fact that the government never acts until the problem reaches a dead-end. This is what happened with Marjayoun’s Hospital, an issue that has been going on for months,” responded Ali al-Amin, a journalist from Shaqra.

Faqih, of the Association of Tobacco Farmers, expressed dismay over the politicizing of the South’s developmental needs, citing as an example the saga of Marjayoun Hospital.

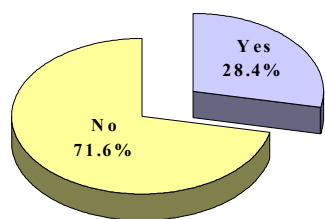
During the occupation, Israel’s so-called Civil Administration was funding the Marjayoun Hospital, whose staff was hired by the administration. The Health Ministry has refused to pay the salaries of after the Israeli withdrawal, and the contingent of doctors and staff has shrunk from more than 130 to only 35.

Hassan Kazan, a civil engineer from Taibeh, said there was a need for more hospitals and also for improving services offered by the clinics, largely run by philanthropic civil and religious associations. He broached another social concern: The absence of health insurance coverage for farmers. “There has to be insurance funds for farmers subsidized by the government,” he said.

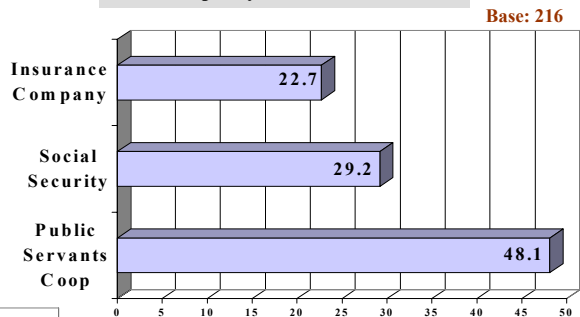
The September 2000 survey showed only 28.4 percent of respondents have healthcare coverage either from private insurance companies, the National Social Security Fund or the Cooperative of Government Employees. This is a low proportion compared to the national average of 42 percent. Uninsured residents use their own earnings to cover their medical bills, or resort to inadequately equipped charity clinics or to the Health Ministry for assistance (Figure 5, September 2000, survey).

Figure 5

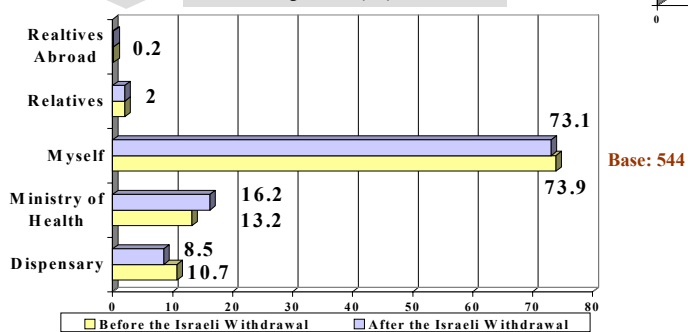
Health



If Yes, Specify Kind of Insurance?



If No, How Do You Cover Your Health Expenses (%)



IV. THE INFRASTRUCTURE

A. Water, Electricity and Telecommunications

The scarcity of water, largely due to the mismanagement of natural resources and the absence of a proper supply network, is singled out as the most crippling problem for the southerners. Most villages depend on truck deliveries of water for every day needs, a cumbersome and costly exercise, with payments per delivery averaging between LL10,000 and LL15,000. Also, the absence of irrigation facilities have forced farmers to turn to specific and limited crops that can be naturally irrigated, such as tobacco, olives and cereals. Naturally, the trend, which began in mid-1980s, has created a surplus in these crops. The unavailability of storage and packaging facilities, in addition to high transportation costs has aggravated the problem, leaving farmers unable to find markets for the produce outside the zone.

Clearly, the hopes of farmers are pinned to the new pledges of completing the Litani River Project in five years after the Kuwaiti government offered to finance it. The project aims to irrigate 17,000 hectares of land in the initial stage, and 33,000 hectares in the second. This would irrigate land at an altitude of 800 meters and below, freeing farmers from the water constraints and allowing them to diversify their crops.

Hussein Rammal, an engineer at the Litani River Project, told the workshop that the project would get off the ground this year and involve digging a 75-kilometer canal from lake Qaraoun to Braachit. The US\$500 million project, he said, would create 30,000 jobs for southerners.

Tahseen Haydar, of the Aitaroun Agricultural Cooperative, complained that in Lebanon “There is no management whatsoever of the natural resources and water simply flows into the sea.” He said this reality contrasted sharply with the situation in Israel, which has less, but efficiently managed resources.

Haydar noted that a quick trip to the border area would prove his point: “Fruit trees are grown all the way to the border from the Israeli side. A few steps to the north, the Lebanese terrain is totally barren.”

There does not seem to be too much concern about the electricity network, despite the regular and chaotic cuts in daily supplies. Workshop participants made only passing references to the need for dependable power supplies to operate industries, but since factories are hardly available at present, the electricity issue is a longer-term target.

The liberated areas have no network for land telephones, but this, too, does not seem to worry the population, which has become used to getting by with cellular telephones.

B. Waste Treatment

There are no solid waste treatment plants in the South. Garbage is dumped in collected in empty lots at the edges of villages and then burned. Aside from the ecological damages this causes, these unscientific methods for disposing of the waste are allowing polluting substances to seep into the soil and ultimately untapped underground water reservoirs, which according to studies conducted by the Litani River Project and others, are abundant in the area.

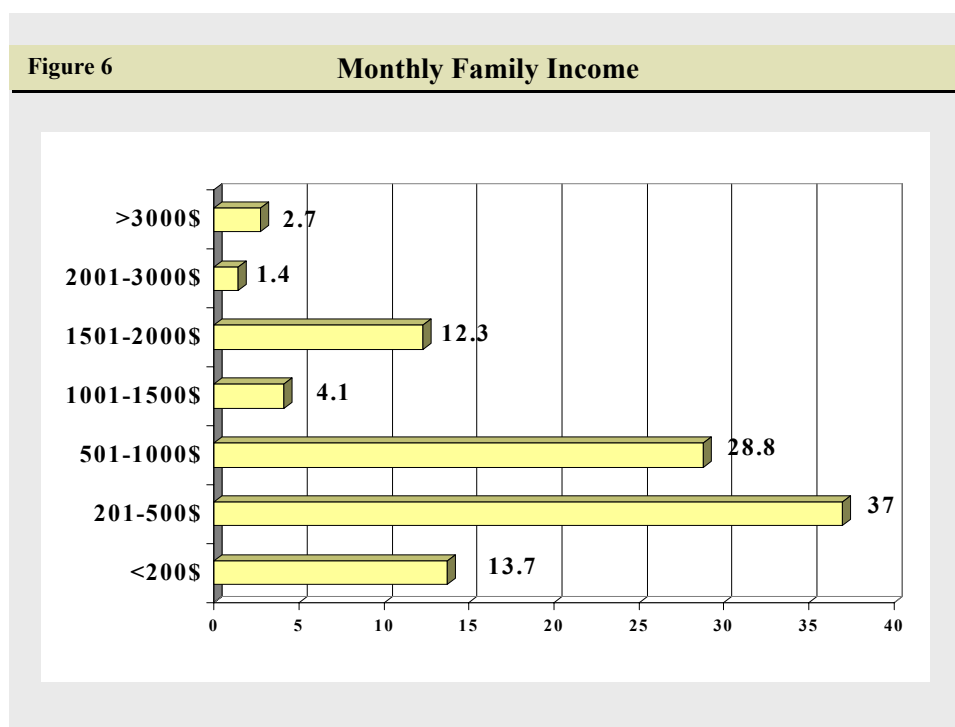
Another problem is that of wastewater. The South is deprived of a proper sewage system. This reality is not restricted to the liberated areas, but the same is also true in villages and towns bordering the former occupation zone. In the two main population centers are Tyre and Nabatiyeh (50,000 residents each), only 70 percent of households and institutions are linked to pipes which carry untreated waste water into the sea opposite Tyre or pours into the valleys of Nabatiyeh, according to surveys conducted by the Ministry of Environment and the Council for Development and Reconstruction. In all five cazas that were formerly occupied, there are 10 villages connected to sewage systems, and all but one carry the flow into valleys or rivers. The only treatment plant available is located in Marjayoun. In more than 100 villages and towns, homes are connected to long-neglected manholes, which are clogged up during the rain, causing them to overflow and contaminate fresh water resources.

“The problem of sewage in the area is a serious one. It is necessary to treat this problem to protect the water resources. Priority has to be given to the establishment of waste-water treatment plants,” said Fouad Hamra, an engineer from Marjayoun, who owns the Dana Hotel. “As for solid waste, garbage burns every day on the entrances to villages. This is a primitive way for disposing of waste, but there is no alternative in the absence of treatment facilities.”

V. INCOME AND SPENDING

The average monthly income per family in the area is US\$525, while spending is US\$600, according to Information International's September-November 2000 survey.

As for participants in the workshop 37 percent of the questionnaire respondents reported monthly earnings between US\$201 and US\$500; and 28.8 percent between US\$501 and US\$1,000. Of the group, 13.7 percent said they were making under US\$200 a month (Figure 6, workshop questionnaire).



Agriculture is the main source of steady income for 26.3 percent of the population. But landowners are not cultivating all their land. Of the formerly occupied 830 square kilometers, about 335 square kilometers are being cultivated and nearly 400 square kilometers of arable terrain is neglected. This is largely due to the absence of water for irrigation and the surplus in crops that can be naturally irrigated.

Another source of income is payments from family members working abroad, but these are inconsistent and vary in amounts, given that some landowners abroad channel money to relatives to help upkeep their own property and not necessarily for the use of the locals for personal expenses.

The Israeli withdrawal has had a direct negative impact on the finances of some 20 percent of the southern population. This is mainly due to the loss of direct salaries paid to militiamen of the South Lebanon Army militia and the Civil Administration, the closure of the border in the face of up to 5,000 people who worked in Israel and the loss of access to Israeli markets. In addition, the decline in these people's purchasing power has indirectly affected small businesses in the area.

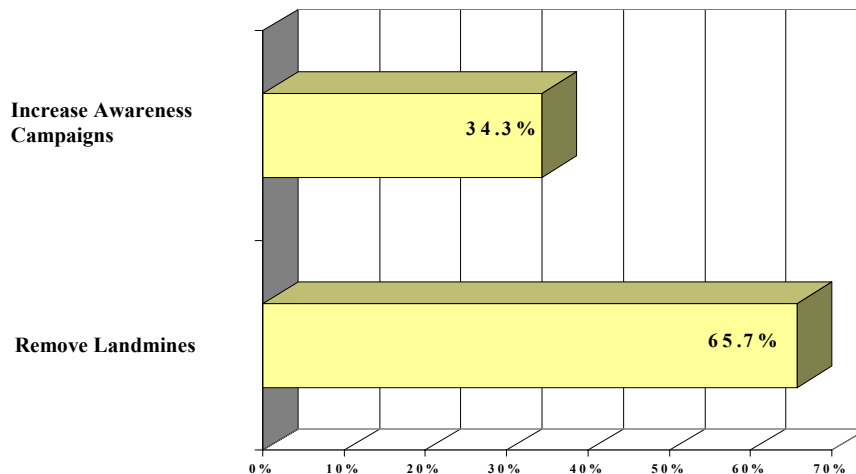
According to a 1999 survey by the Higher Relief Commission and the UNDP, the various facets of interaction with the Israelis were raising an average monthly income of \$12 million for the southern population. The withdrawal brought this cash flow to a complete halt.

VI. THE AGRICULTURE

As the pillar of the economy in the South, there's an urgent need for reforming the agricultural sector on many levels. Farmers are desperate to diversify their crops, and market or process their produce for industrial purposes. But they don't have the facilities or means, and the available expertise is inadequate. Some of the more pressing demands made at the workshop included foreign technical assistance to study the climate and the soil to identify new lucrative crops that could be planted, and to help diagnose and cure diseases regularly afflicting plantations and livestock. Another prerequisite for the farmers is the construction of agricultural tracks to allow them to reach remote plantations for plowing, planting and harvest.

Since the Israeli withdrawal, landmine explosions have been an almost daily occurrence in the south, with dozens killed or maimed by these incidents. Naturally, farmers are anxious about cultivating neglected land in the absence of accurate maps pointing to the estimated 130,000 landmines infesting the area - a legacy of the various armies, paramilitary forces and militias that were involved in the conflict in one form or another since 1968 (Figure 7, workshop questionnaire).

Figure 7 **What Can Be Done in Terms of Landmines?**



A. Tobacco

In all, 16,800 families in the South - and estimated 75,000 people - depend wholly or partially on tobacco cultivation for their livelihoods, according to Hassan Faqih of the Association of Tobacco Farmers. Of those, 5,796 families live in the liberated areas, cultivating tobacco in 30 square kilometers of land.

The estimated production per donum, or 1,000 square meters, is 100-110 kilograms and the government buys the South's entire crop at encouraging rates of 30 percent per kilogram more than market prices. "Had it not been for this subsidy, the farmers would not be able to meet their costs," Faqih said.

But there are no tobacco processing plants in the area, an industry, which would help create jobs opportunities, according to Fawwaz Khoury, a teacher from Marjayoun. He suggested that the central Regie of Tobacco and Tambac in Beirut move some of its equipment to the South for processing purposes, which would not only create jobs, but also reduce transportation costs.

The lack of technical expertise to identify diseases that afflict tobacco plantations and the shortages in pesticides have added to the burdens of farmers, according to Faqih.

B. Olives and Olive Oil

Southerners turned to olive crops in the late 1980s, when the Litani River Project with all that it entailed of irrigation potential, was put indefinitely on hold as a result of the political and military turmoil. Before then, there were small olive groves only in the Hasbaya region, with a small olive press, churning out limited amounts of oil for the town and surroundings areas.

But what quickly turned into a relatively cheap, naturally irrigated and lucrative produce, quickly mushroomed across the South, with nowhere to market the surplus. Farmers turned to olive oil production, but were challenged domestically by cheaper products smuggled from Syria, the absence of foreign markets and inadequate transportation means.

At present, there are some 120 square kilometers of olive groves in the border area, with only two commercial pressing facilities, one in Hasbaya and the other in Kfar Kila. Small facilities in some villages can hardly provide the local inhabitants with their needs. Farmers complain of long delays in processing at the two major presses, as well as costly transportation, which increase production costs and ultimately both wholesale and retail prices.

Another complication stems from the absence of agricultural laboratories, which could test the quality of oil for its classification, according to the internationally recognized acidity levels. This makes the product unappealing to consumers.

Another peril to the crop is the spread of a type of disease, known as *Cycloconium Oleaginum*, which causes grave damages to the trees and for which not enough pesticides are available locally.

Hussein Atwi, who heads the Agricultural Cooperative of Kounine, said: “Every cooperative needs to have its own olive-press. Also, for every caza, we need a laboratory to test the quality.”

Malek Abu Ghida, a prominent merchant in Hasbaya, who also heads the town’s Agricultural Cooperative, said that in its effort to support the olive oil industry, the government agreed to buy 15,000 containers (16 kilograms each) from the two cazas of Hasbaya and Marjayoun. “This is an insignificant amount, given the fact that this year’s production in Hasbaya alone topped 60,000 containers,” he remarked.

He and other farmers urged The Netherlands to help find European markets for the oil produced in the South. Also, Abu Ghida suggested the construction of a modern facility for oil production, which would be funded by a long-term loan repayable over 10 years or more, insisting southerners were “not looking for gifts from anyone.”

C. Other Crops

Annual honey production has reached 40 tons a year since its relatively recent introduction to the South’s agricultural scene. According to a 1998 survey by the Order of Engineers. This is a new industry for the southerners, which flourished in the mid-1990s. Farmers believe in the potential of increasing production to satisfy national demand and eventually do away with honey imports. But packaging and quality-control techniques are needed to help improve the industry. Also, farmers have encountered problems confronting a rare disease that attacked beehives in 1998, and which could recur.

Cereals, mainly lentils and wheat, cover some 90 square kilometers of fields. But there are no silos for preserving the produce, nor mills to produce flour. Farmers harvest their own domestic needs, and leave much of the rest in the fields. Furthermore, improper storage damages the quality of cereals, of which only small quantities find their way to the national market.

According to the Order of Engineers survey, there are up to 100 square kilometers of fruit and vegetable plantations in the 114 villages targeted by the study. These consist mainly of almond and apricot trees, grapevines and some citruses. Watermelon and cantaloupe are grown in the Khiyam and Marjayoun valleys, and some greenhouses for seasonal vegetables are scattered across the South. But the transportation costs are prohibitive. Farmers suggested the establishment of a central marketplace in the South to encourage wholesalers to buy their produce. Omar Hashem, a farmer from Shebaa, said his native village was full of fruit and vegetable trees for which there is no market. In addition to a central market he proposed establishing small factories for canning the produce or processing preserves and other food items.

D. Livestock, Dairy Products and Fish

Cattle raising declined dramatically during the occupation years. The military confrontations left farmers unable to protect their stock, and the absence of facilities for collecting and processing milk made it less worthwhile to focus on livestock. Before the outbreak of the confrontations, there were some 15,000 cows, today there are no more than 6,500, according to the Order of Engineers survey. In addition to the cows, currently there are some 13,000 sheep and 60,000 goats.

“In 1974, there were more than 8,000 cows in my area. Today, they are less than 1,500,” said Zaki Abboud, a veterinarian from Blat. To encourage southerners to revert to cattle-raising, he suggested that cooperatives for livestock production, akin to those devoted to agriculture, be established and loans be granted to farmers to buy animals.

Ahmad Abdullah, a technician at the Agriculture Authority in Nabatiyeh, complained that the government was “spending loads of money on the import of meat and milk,” when local production could be encouraged and, perhaps, increased to cover the country’s needs. However, he said vaccines and proper veterinary care would have to be secured as a precondition for expanding this sector.

Mahmoud Hazimeh, a veterinarian from Meis al-Jabal, underlined the impact of improper animal care on the health of people, citing as an example the current frenzy over the mad cow disease. To protect both the population and livestock, the South required “sophisticated laboratories to identify animal diseases,” he said, adding that the Central Laboratory in Beirut is incapable of meeting the needs of the South. “Without the tools, our job as veterinarians is more like fortune-telling when it comes to diagnosing afflicted animals,” he said.

Another major problem is the absence of a slaughterhouse in the south, which requires farmers to slaughter their cattle on their own property in an unscientific manner.

Both farmers and veterinarians stressed the need for dairy plants to collect and process milk. This would also provide an incentive for farmers to raise cattle.

“Perhaps The Netherlands, with its vast expertise in caring for cows and their produce, could do what the Americans did and send us some dairy cows for a pilot farm,” suggested Nabil Abu Awwad, a merchant from Hasbaya.

Fawwaz Khoury, the Marjayoun teacher, said that in addition to dairy processing plants, refrigerator trucks would have to be secured for transporting meat, milk and its derivatives.

Other suggestions included the creation of fish farms along riverbeds.

VII. ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM

The environment has been neglected and damaged since the late 1960s. Sophisticated armaments, including phosphorous bombs and other such ordinance, have burned chunks of the virgin terrain all the way from Hasbaya in the east to the coastal stretch. According to participants in the workshop, Israeli troops, for defensive purposes, had scorched fields near their military outposts and sprayed them with chemicals to eliminate all plantations to strip potential infiltrators of their natural cover.

Forestation, the treatment of sewage and solid waste and improving the scenery in general would make the area more attractive to foreign and local tourists. Also, workshop participants and respondents to the September 2000 survey unanimously preferred the construction of resorts and hotels to create jobs and lure visitors.

With the population pre-occupied with survival under occupation and government departments absent throughout the occupation, many historic sites and potential tourist destinations were neglected and are in need of major rehabilitation.

“There are many historic sites that can attract tourists, such as the Beaufort Castle in Arnoun, Qana and Hasbaya. We need to turn attention to these sites and market them so they are included on the itinerary of tourists,” said Fouad Hamra, whose Dana Hotel currently is the only accommodation available to tourists in the entire border area.

VIII. Agro-INDUSTRY

The village profiles compiled from last year's surveys show that there are no significant industries in the South, and that the ones that existed before the conflict had significantly shrunk, except in the cases of olive oil and honey production.

In Hasbaya and Marjayoun, olive oil is the main industrial produce, and honey is a distant second. There are also metal workshops, producing pipes, nails, screws and small heaters. Recently, the population has taken engaged in micro-industries, such as home-made preserves, yogurt, labneh and cheeses.

In Rashaya al-Fakhar, residents still cling to their traditional handicraft of pottery-making, but in limited quantities.

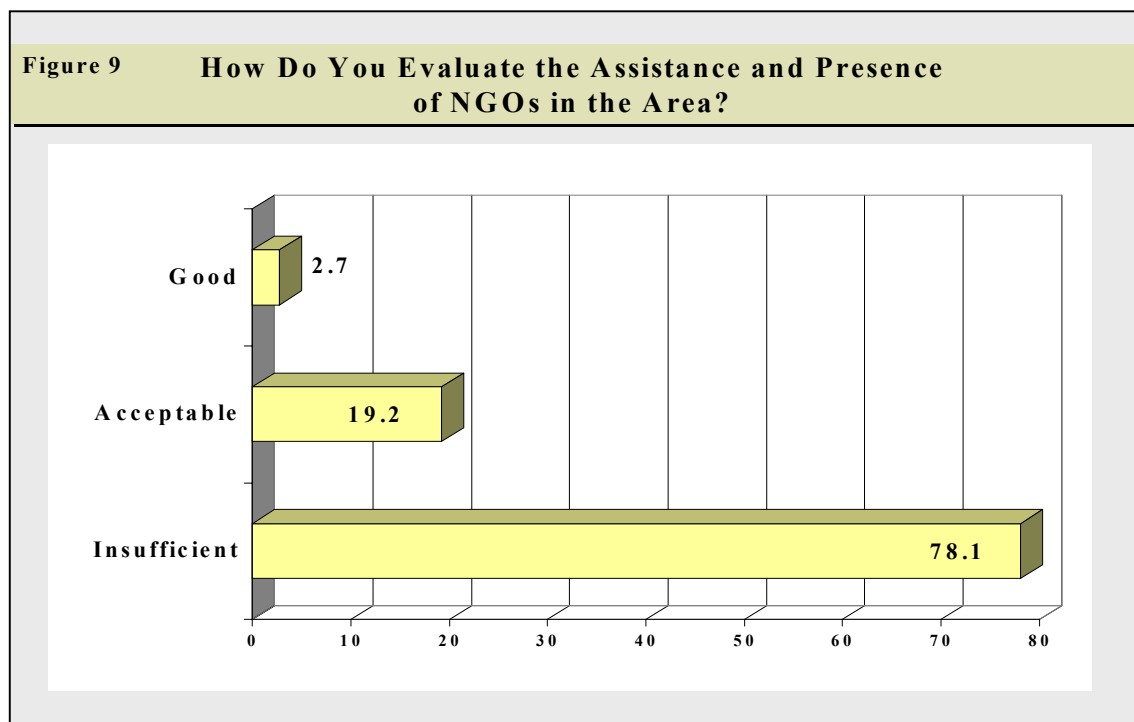
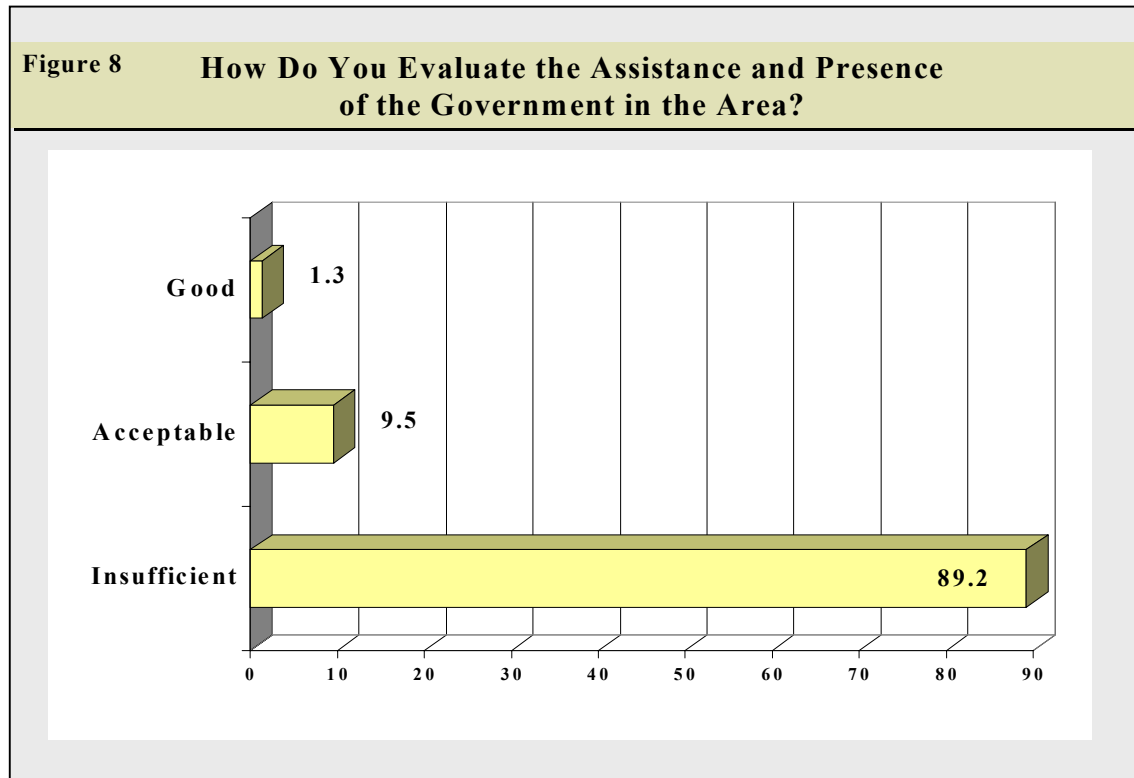
The Jezzine decorative cutlery is still produced, albeit in limited quantities and sent to artisan shops outside the area.

There are also small silk factories in Marjayoun, Hasbaya and Bint Jbeil.

Neameh Joumaa, a human rights activist, discussed the pre-war leather and shoe-making industries that had flourished in his native town of Bint Jbeil, but were overwhelmed by smuggling. He underscored the need to revive these trades.

IX. POLITICS

In a country notorious for divisions, the population that has braved the occupation years appears remarkably united in its vision for the future and its priorities for development. There is a general feeling of dismay over the reluctance of the Lebanese and foreign governments as well as local and international NGOs to initiate projects in the South (Figures 8 and 9 workshop questionnaire).



“We have been visited over the past few months by a number of delegations and institutions - Americans, Europeans and Asians - but nothing was came out of these efforts except for dreams and promises,” said Wahjih Abu Hammein, head of the Hibariyeh Agricultural Cooperative.

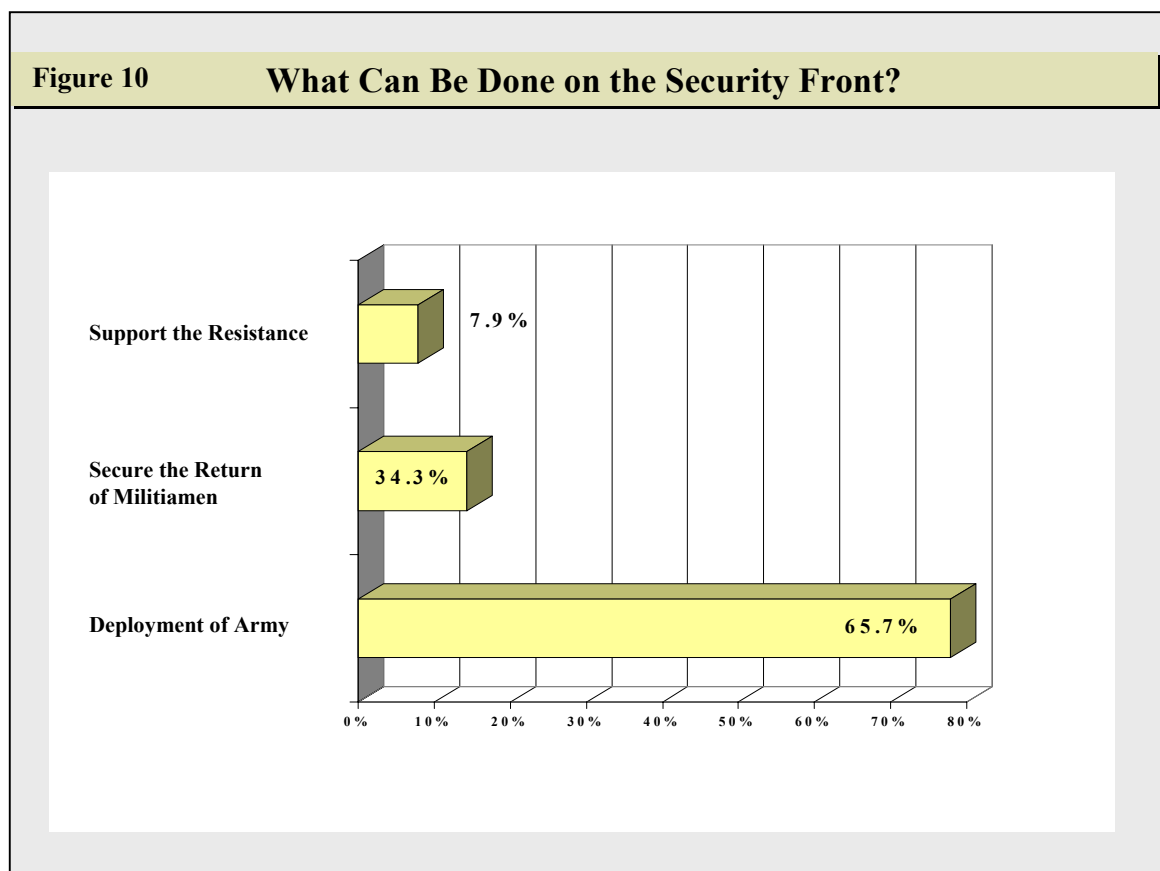
Only Mercy Corp has been actively involved in the development, he said, adding that international associations should “set up offices in the liberated areas, not in Beirut or elsewhere in the country, if they are to be taken as serious partners in this effort.”

Maurice Dabaghi, the Marjayoun School principal, suggested joint partnership between local and foreign groups or individuals in developmental projects.

In contrast with other parts of Lebanon, politics takes a back seat, and there was hardly any mention of domestic political issues during the workshop, except in the context of the impact of the Middle East conflict and the stalemate in the peace process on development in the area.

“Our civil society needs stability to become productive and to develop,” said Dabaghi in appealing to The Netherlands to mobilize pressure on Israel to accept a peace settlement.

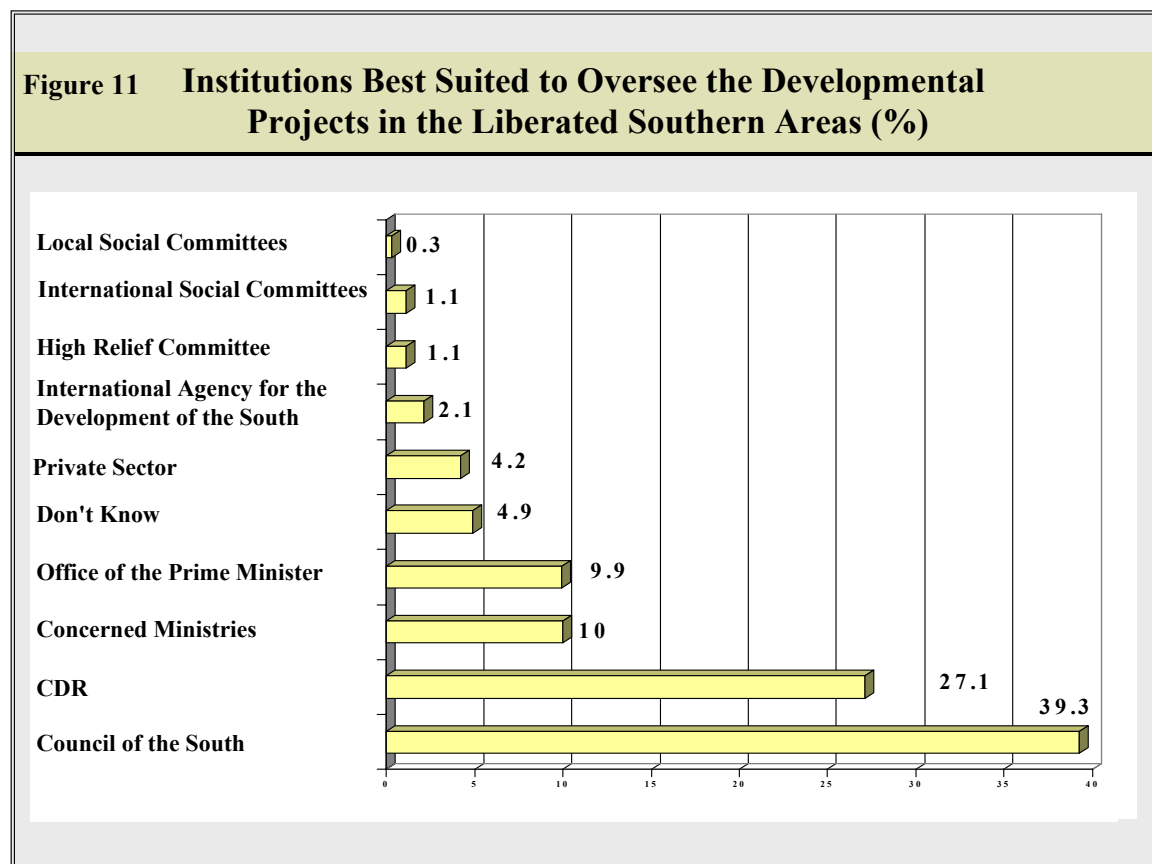
Significantly, 77.8 percent of the participants who filled the workshop questionnaire supported the deployment of the army to the border, a move opposed by the government, ostensibly to prevent the troops from turning into border guards for Israel (Figure 10, workshop questionnaire).



But there was no open discussion of security concerns, other than the landmine issue, at the workshop.

There also is a clear yearning for quick reintegration into the political, social and economic mainstream. This was evident from the recurring calls at the workshop for the convening of municipal elections and for restoring to the local governments their authority so they could tackle some of the problems. The government had promised to arrange for local polls within a period of six months once the Israelis left. But the deadline has long since past and no dates for the polls have been set.

Also, in last year's survey, government administrations were identified as best suited to oversee the development of the South (Figure 11, Survey 2000).



X. RECOMMENDATIONS

Of all the problems gripping the south in the post-withdrawal era, landmines are the most worrying peril, endangering the lives and property of the population. This requires the mobilization of a concentrated international effort to eliminate this threat. But improving general conditions would require other investments and efforts.

A. Education

1. Provide schools experienced teachers for schools.
2. Secure modern learning equipment, laboratories and computers.
3. Rehabilitate public schools.
4. Expand the courses offered by the Lebanese University branches in Nabatiyeh and Tyre.
5. Set up technical and vocational schools.
6. Establish public libraries.

B. Health and Infrastructure

1. Build solid waste treatment plants.
2. Construct an adequate sewage treatment system to protect underground water reserves.
3. Support the Marjayoun Hospital, which is threatened with closure, and supervise the smooth launch of the newly opened Rashaya Hospital. Also provide equipment and medical staff to clinics so they may handle first aid, emergencies and ensure transportation to hospitals for patients who need transfer.
4. Establish a medical insurance scheme for farmers.

C. Agriculture

1. Secure water for irrigation and household use through implementation of the Litani River Project, and the construction of dams and man-made lakes.
2. Establish technical academies that would offer guidance to farmers to improve agriculture produce, introduce new techniques and help combat diseases
3. Set up packaging and storage facilities for agricultural produce.
4. Provide support for Agricultural Cooperatives by supplying them with necessary tools that can be shared by farmers to reduce production cost (plowing and harvest equipment, transportation vehicles etc.)
5. Introduce alternative crops suitable for the terrain and climate of the south to phase out tobacco farming, which cannot be sustained except through the government's annual subsidies of about LL70 billion.
6. Improve the quality of olives and providing technical assistance in fighting disease.
7. Secure appropriate storage for olives before pressing.
8. Provide quality-testing facilities for olive oil presses, establishing modern pressing facilities to cope with the crops, ensuring proper storage of oil and identifying new markets for this produce.
9. Establish packaging, canning and processing facilities for surplus fruits and vegetables.

10. Establish at least two facilities, one in Hasbaya-Marjayoun and another in the Bint Jbeil area, for collecting milk and processing dairy products. This would also encourage farmers to go back to cattle-raising if ensured markets for their produce.
11. Establish farms and grazing grounds according to international standards to ensure healthy growth of animals.
12. Build a modern central slaughterhouse and a central laboratory to ensure the safety of meat products and secure the slaughter of animals according to environmentally friendly and healthcare guidelines.
13. Encourage the beehive industry by providing guidelines for the farmers on ways to combat disease and improve the process of honey extraction and packaging.
14. Establish fish farms on riverbanks.

D. Tourism

1. Rehabilitate cultural sites.
2. Promote tour groups.
3. Improve the environment through forestation.

E. Industry

1. Set up small-scale agro-industry factories in the five cazas
2. Encourage the revival of local handicrafts, and leather factories.

F. Politics

1. Prepare for local elections.
2. Dispatch the army.
3. Improve the presence of government departments in the area.

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