

each other even through tough times: Al Kafa'at Foundation, Lebanon



In 2008 Raif Shwayri (left), the director of Al Kafa'at Foundation, wrote to BibleLands:

“Since 2006, we have been facing difficult times on all fronts including political stalemates and an unprecedented social crisis – with financial consequences in all economic sectors, including institutions like Al Kafa'at.

“The cost of living has gone tremendously high in the past year. Our budget is suffering from the inflated prices of general purchases which have nearly doubled in a year: for a can of milk, we now pay 29,000 Lebanese Liras as opposed to 16,000 a year ago. The cost of electricity has gone way beyond our forecasts and is eating up our budgets.

“As for Al Kafa'at, our reserves – originally equivalent to 12 months of operation – have devalued to an equivalent of seven months, due to the sharp rise in costs.

“It looks like it may be some time before the public contribution is revised, given that this dilemma concerns all charity institutions and hospitals throughout Lebanon, and not just Al Kafa'at.

“In the meantime, we at Al Kafa'at cannot stand idly by and wait for



our reserves to vanish completely. We had another Board meeting yesterday and have looked seriously at suspending some of the departments that are particularly expensive. What is unfortunate is the fact that the departments that are most expensive are the ones that cater for the most fragile populations: those with multiple handicaps, people with autism, and the infants at the Early Intervention Unit.

“It is very hard to look at this situation objectively but I pray that it resolves in the interest of all the children concerned.”

Upon hearing this news, BibleLands wanted to do something to help; to stand with the community of Al Kafa'at at this difficult time. The closure of these expensive departments would have severely affected many disabled people. It would have meant that 370 children, many with multiple disabilities, weren't enrolled in September 2008, and that 120 staff members would no longer have employment. Therefore, we agreed to provide an interest-free loan, to ease their cash flow, and ensure the school could

take these 370 children in September.

This allowed the Board time and opportunity to continue to lobby the government to revise its grants – although we are pleased to report that they didn't need to take up the loan BibleLands offered. Now, thanks to increased contributions from the government the future is ensured for every child at Al Kafa'at. Here's what Raif said in a subsequent communication, “I have to say how deeply touched I was with your support all through the hard times. This is indeed the consequence of a “working model of authentic, effective partnership.”

The Al Kafa'at Foundation in Beirut is a unique organisation of seven centres offering education, rehabilitation and vocational training to over 4,500

beneficiaries, with a variety of disabilities and special needs. The Foundation's name means 'capabilities'; it concentrates not on the disabilities but on the capabilities of each student.

