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mural initiative 2016

Each year since 2013, the Operations Support Office team (OSO) in Lebanon has led initiatives to paint colourful murals on the external boundary walls of UNRWA installations in Palestinian refugee camps across the country. The aim of the initiative is to generate community engagement in improving the camp environment, promote positive messages through artwork and, at the same time, preserve the neutrality of UNRWA installations, and essential services, such as education and health.

The project has been coordinated by the OSO team in five areas of Lebanon, with installations selected based on their needs for increased visual neutrality. Analysis of monthly neutrality reports revealed that the Department of Education experiences the highest proportion of unresolved but solvable neutrality issues, and hence was a target for mural interventions with 67 per cent of murals on schools. The majority of murals (67 per cent) addressed recurrent neutrality issues (such as political posters or graffiti on outside walls), that could be solvable with appropriate budget. One third (33 per cent) of murals addressed issues classified as 'persistent' neutrality concerns.

Between June and August 2016, Palestine refugee children painted the external walls of 12 UNRWA installations [eight schools, one camp service office, one health clinic, one relief and social services office and one distribution center] across five camps in Lebanon: Burj Barajneh, Wavel, Ein El Hilweh, Rashidieh and Nahr el-Bared. Mural paintings covered themes such as sports, environmental health, caring and inclusive communities or peace and friendship across the world. To enhance community participation, artists from the communities were selected in each area to facilitate the involvement of UNRWA students in designing, drawing and painting the murals. The OSO team conducted introductory meetings with interested students to explain the project, its aim, process and timing and ensured that consent was given by the parents for students to participate.

The present document provides an overview of the 2016 mural initiative across all areas of operation of UNRWA in Lebanon, profiling in particular the activities undertaken to address persistent neutrality issues in four installations: the Camp Services Office and Relief and Social Services Office II in Ein El Hilweh camp and Aqsa and Naqab Schools in Rashidieh camp.



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The mural initiative and this publication were made possible through the generous support of the United States Government.

saida:

Following property damages (bullet holes) to the Relief and Social Services Office II in Ein El Hilweh camp, resulting from armed clashes in 2014, the office was considered for the 2015 mural project. However, because of ongoing tensions, it was postponed and selected in 2016 instead. The second installation chosen in Saida area was the Ein El Hilweh Camp Services Office, which had experienced recurrent political posters on its external walls. The 2016 mural initiative therefore provided an opportunity to address these issues sensitively and with the location of both installations on main roads inside the camp, also contributed to improving the overall aesthetics in the camp.

Seven female students from Merj Ben Amer School and six male students from Sammou School, both located in Ein El Hillweh refugee camp, participated in the mural project. The artist facilitating the activity was a former UNRWA

teacher who participated in previous UNRWA mural projects, and therefore was familiar with the aim and purpose of the initiative. The mural project started on the 14th of July with four sensitization sessions held by the OSO team with the students to raise awareness on humanitarian principles, while the artist supported them with technical and artistic guidance. The boys were assigned the external wall of the Relief and Social Services Office II, while the girls were assigned the external wall of the Camp Services Office. The drawing process commenced on the 1st of August and the painting was finalized by the 16th of August.

Finally, the OSO team held a party on the 18th of August to thank the students for their work by presenting them with gifts and as well to acknowledge the support of the UNRWA staff involved.



Saida – Ein El Hilweh Camp – Camp Services Office (CSO)



Saida – Ein El Hilweh Camp – Relief and Social Services Office II



tyre:

In Tyre, a common external wall between two UNRWA installations, Naqab preparatory school and Aqsa secondary school was selected for the 2016 mural initiative as this site experienced recurrent and persistent neutrality issues in the form of political graffiti and posters. The external boundary walls of this school compound are located on a main road within Rashidieh camp. It therefore enjoys high visibility and meant a stronger impact of the mural initiative for school children and inhabitants alike. Eight girls and two boys from three different schools (Aqsa and Naqab schools directly and Deir Yassin school located in the nearby El Buss camp) were involved in the project.

The mural project was launched on the 28th June, and the artist facilitator conducted four preparatory sessions with the students, including two in the presence of the OSO team which provided guidance on various topics including the thematic of

the paintings. Teams of two students were assigned different sections of the wall for their artwork and painted between the 5th and the 20th of August. A thank you ceremony was held on the 16th of September with the students who were presented with gifts in appreciation of their creativity and contribution.



**Tyre – Rashidieh Camp – Aqsa
Secondary School & Naqab
Preparatory School**

Selected images from mural initiatives across Lebanon

Beqaa – Wavel Camp – Al Qastal School



Beqaa – Wavel Camp – Distribution Center



North Lebanon Area (NLA) – Amqa School, Jabal Tabor School, Battir School, Manara School, Toubas School and Ein Karem School



Central Lebanon Area (CLA) – Burj Barajneh Camp – Health Clinic

