

Lebanon (1987)

In the heady days following the success of the initial immunization campaign in El Salvador, James Grant proclaimed that El Salvador had set a shining example that should be emulated in conflict zones worldwide. Two years later this was done in Lebanon. Again, the action was initiated by UNICEF. Unlike in El Salvador, however, there was no obvious mediator to deal with the many warring factions in Lebanon. The task fell to James Grant and to Richard Reid, the regional head of UNICEF in the Middle East. For almost a year they conducted painstaking negotiations with the different interested parties, including the Iranian backed Hezbollah, Israel and Syria.⁴⁵ The tactic of the UNICEF representatives was similar to that used in El Salvador. They explained to their negotiating opposites that in twelve years of civil war, medical services and precautions for children had been neglected. Infant mortality had increased to the point where more children may have been dying from malnutrition and disease than from the violence in war. UNICEF persuaded the different factions that the need was so great in Lebanon that the only way to tackle the scourge of disease was to observe a ceasefire lasting three days. The first three-day ceasefire would take place in September 1987, to be followed by one each in October and November. The argument proved convincing. According to Richard Reid, everyone was ready to unite for a single humanitarian effort.⁴⁶

As in El Salvador, the programme in Lebanon was accompanied by a social mobilization campaign. Television and radio stations alerted the people to the drive and even Lebanon's Islamic Mullahs helped spread the word from the mosques.⁴⁷

The immunization process was in every sense a cooperative one. UNICEF organized the campaign and provided syringes and vaccines. The World Health Organization supplied

⁴⁵ Michael J. Berlin, "UNICEF Proclaims Success Inoculating Lebanon's Young," *The Washington Post*, 24 September 1987, p. 8.

⁴⁶ See: Ihsan Hijazi, "Chaos in Lebanon Hampering UNICEF's Work," *The New York Times*, 25 October 1987, p. 6.

⁴⁷ Adrian Hamilton, "Lebanon Holds Fire for Sick Children," *The Observer* (London), 20 September 1987, p. 2.