

**ASSABIL: Friends of Public Libraries
Seeking Support to Establish a Mobile Library
August 2006**

What is a mobile library?

In many parts of the world, “mobile libraries” are used to reach those who are unable to take advantage of the nearest public library. A mobile library is a bus or van that offers many of the services available at public libraries: a core collection of reference materials; a wide selection of books that can be borrowed; a trained librarian; and cultural activities. Although mobile libraries are always a wonderful way to reach people who live in remote areas, they play an especially important role during the immediate aftermath of a war or natural disaster. This is the situation in Lebanon today.

The need for a mobile library in Lebanon

The initial estimates for the civilian damage that was caused by the war are staggering: some estimates go as high as \$7 billion. The most widely quoted number is \$3.5 billion. The damage includes bridges and roads; houses, schools, and businesses; the industrial sector; petrol stations; military installations; and much more. There are entire areas in southern Beirut—places where more than half a million people lived, worked, and went to school—that have been completely destroyed. It is easy to see how a mobile library—a library that can travel to where people live and that can serve many widely scattered communities—would be enormously helpful and provide a range of services that is not available anywhere else at the moment.

How would it work?

ASSABIL, Friends of Public Libraries, is seeking funds to purchase, equip, and staff a mobile library—a mini-bus—that would be driven throughout south Beirut and southern Lebanon to those areas that have been most severely affected by the war. We would work with people in the communities that have been most severely affected (in places like Yarine, Tebnine, Srifa, Kfar Lela, etc.) to identify centrally located and easily accessible locations in these communities where the bus would stop twice a month for several hours at a time. The bus would travel a regular and predictable route that would include stops at 11 villages in southern Lebanon. Whenever possible, we would coordinate with local schools and try to arrange to have one of the stops be at one of the schools. We would coordinate with teachers to organize activities that would introduce children to the “library” and give children the opportunity to select a book to borrow and/or to do research for a school project. The mobile library would also be available to adults who might be looking for something to read or in search of some information.