

*The following notes were issued separately – they are presented here in one document for ease.
The first raised £50,000, the second £300,000.*

1. Activity centres – concept note

January 15 2012



1 'New Park', Sirte, 31 December 2011

cases which litter what were once water cascades and fountains, you eventually come to a children's play area.

Bullet holes have been blasted through its slide, climbing frame and other equipment. A 'rocking lion' ride lies in pieces. Just a few yards away, a rocket has gouged a hole in the ground before exploding.

It's just one example of the way in which the Libyan revolution has impacted on the lives of young people in the city. Sirte was Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's birthplace, and the place he fled as he realised his regime was collapsing in the face of the Libyan revolutionaries' progress and demands.

From early September, when he arrived in the city, until October 20, when he was captured and killed, it's estimated 60 bombs per night fell on Sirte. Hundreds of buildings, including homes and schools, have been reduced to rubble. Thousands

IT WAS so new, it hadn't even been named. But 'New Park', as it was known to residents of Sirte, looked set to be a popular addition to the small city.

With water features, open spaces, sports facilities, a coffee shop and children's play areas, the central leisure area was designed as a place for families to relax together.

Today, it is deserted. Rather than the trickle of water and the noise of children playing, the only sounds to be heard are the huge shards of metal, hanging from the park's ruined coffee shop, creaking in the wind.

If you pick your way through the broken glass, and the huge shell-



2 New Park, Sirte, 31 December 2011



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more have been holed by shells, gutted by fire, or peppered with bullets. On the streets, unexploded missiles pose dangers perhaps even more serious than those of the slowly collapsing buildings.

Children are particularly at risk, because to a youngster, a large, imposing piece of metal, such as an unexploded shell, is an item not of fear, but of fascination. And a building full of holes, bearing scorch marks and emptied of its inhabitants or pupils, spells excitement rather than peril.

Children need to play. In every country around the world, they must be able to relax, and to cut loose. And in post-conflict situations where youngsters like those of Sirte have lain awake at night wondering whether the falling ordnance will hit their homes, or whether an unluckily placed gunshot will injure or kill a friend or family member, it is even more important, to help re-normalise their lives, and help them reconnect with the world around them.



3 Children play at abandoned building, Sirte, 3 January 2011



4 Children within 5m of supermarket blaze, Sirte, 1 January 2012

But there are no youth clubs, safe parks or even simple open areas set aside for children in Sirte. Its residents are too busy focussing on attempts to repair their homes, clinics and schools, in short, to rebuild their lives. Save the Children is working within the city, to create safe places for youngsters to socialise with their peers, and enable them to play in safety.

Recent events stress the need for such areas.

On January 1, a fire broke out at a derelict supermarket in Sirte centre. Of the crowd which gathered to watch, more than half were young children, aged 5-11, who had clambered over a fence, into the store's car park, to get a closer look at the blaze.

As part of Save the Children's assessment of the city's schools, I visited Sana Youssef primary school. It has been almost destroyed by bombs, and is in imminent danger of complete collapse, though it is still just about in one piece.

Missiles have also damaged the school's surrounding wall, meaning even though it is closed, youngsters from nearby houses can sneak in. Most use the expansive playground, or the small football pitches – themselves a little too close to the crumbling building for comfort. But as I took



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photos and made notes of the damage, a group of six or seven children aged 5-10 approached me, and tugging on my sleeve, led me inside.



5 The interior of Sana Youssef School, 5 January 2012

From within, the damage looked even worse. The ceilings which had not collapsed were sagging ominously, interior walls bore large shell holes, and rubble and the building's exposed, broken, steel supports starkly indicated the danger posed to anyone entering.

The youngsters were not concerned. They showed me the stairs – holed and broken in places – and clearly intended to climb them. I stopped, told them no and led them back outside. They promised never to enter the building again, but I had to leave before they did, and in any case, they are not the only children in the area. This school, despite its dangers, is clearly an attractive place to play.

Save the Children has opened three activity centres in the city. Fifteen more are planned. They contain play equipment and run activities, to offer young people a safe place to play, draw, write, and if they want to, talk about their recent experiences. They are vital to the recovery of the city's youth, and its continued safety.

But the charity needs your help.

For a donation of £3,125, you can help us create one carpeted centre, with a capacity of 30 children at a time.

It will contain cushions, art materials, games, table tennis and table football tables, a CD player, electricity, heating and lighting.

For £46,875 we can open all 15. You can help us provide a better standard of living for around 40,000 children in Sirte, whose lives have been torn apart by a war they played no part in.



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2. School Repairs

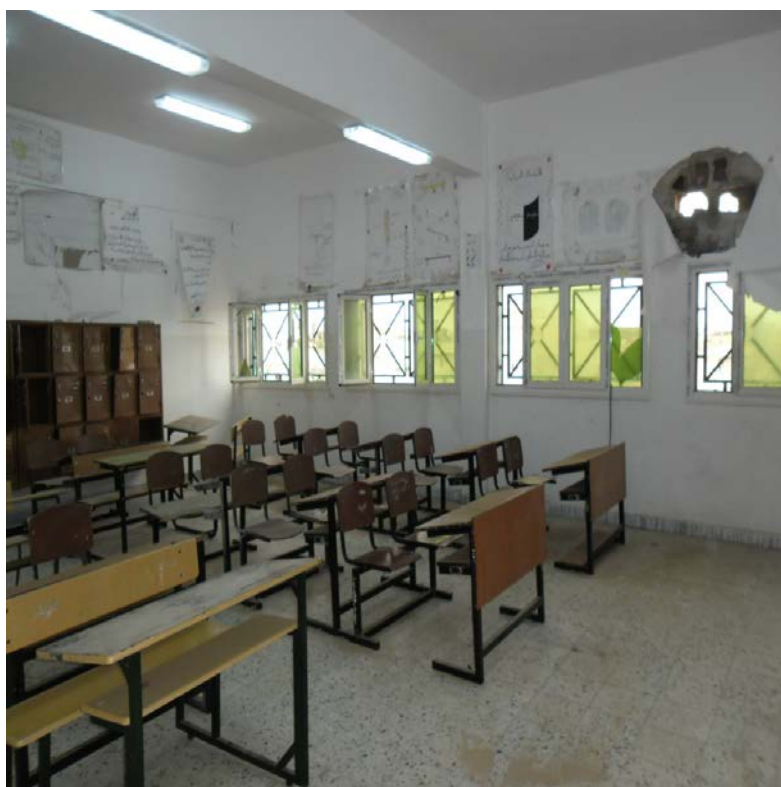
16 January 2012

THEY SAY if you ask a silly question, you'll get a silly answer.

So it is, when I ask Sa'ad Mufteh to explain why the school he runs desperately needs windows and chairs, he shoots a strange look at me, and speaks sharply.

My translator shuffles his feet, and looks at the ground.

'He says it's because the children here will have to stand up all day, and they will be freezing and catch diseases.'



1 Al Fateh School, Sirte, 5 January 2012

We are stood in a classroom at Al Fateh school, in the northern Libyan city of Sirte. Posters drawn by youngsters hang on the walls, the lights are on, and desks are facing where the teacher should be standing. But behind the rows of tables, small lockers to be used by students are dented and broken, nine of sixteen panes of glass are shattered, and above one window, a hole gapes where a rocket has smashed its way through the wall.

Al Fateh school opened for students on January 7, the day before we visited.

Three months after the Libyan revolution ended, Sirte is struggling even to begin to return to normal.

The city was Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's birthplace, and the place he spent his final days.

He fled there in early September 2011, as it became clear his regime was close to being overthrown by revolutionary forces.

Those troops, backed by NATO ground forces and ships positioned off Sirte's coast, surrounded the city. Residents say more than 60 bombs per night rained on the city until Gaddafi's capture and death on October 20.

The vast majority of residents – well over 149,000 of the 150,000 people who lived there – escaped the city. But they returned to destruction. Thousands of buildings had been destroyed. Many thousands more are peppered with bullet-holes, have been gutted by fire and have had holes several metres wide blasted through them by rockets and other missiles.



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Sirte's schools are no exception. There are 25 in the city. Two have been bombed so heavily all traces of them must be cleared before a complete rebuild can begin. Others have suffered serious structural damage, which could require extensive work, taking several months to complete.

But at 17 schools, there are more simple, but immediate, needs. Windows are broken at every school – every single window in some cases. Classroom and school entrance doors have been broken, smashed off their hinges, or shot through by looters. Most have breaks in their electricity supply, which must be fixed for lessons to begin, and need urgent replacement of water pipes to enable children to use the toilet, or drink water during the day.



2 Al Halood Primary School, Sirte, 6 January 2012

At Al Halood, a small primary school fondly known to locals as 'the school in the hole' because it sits in a small sand bowl near Sirte's centre, headteacher Dabnoon Ibrahim said his first priority was replacing windows.

He said: 'The situation is desperate because it's winter time. We can't expect children to learn when they are shivering because there are no windows. We have eight rooms for teaching and all are missing at least two windows. It's vital.'

But as he took me around the school, another problem came to light.

Mr Ibrahim said: 'The water is not working. Pipes have been smashed by missiles. Others were broken by soldiers who came here as the revolution ended. It means pupils can't use the toilets. We can bring in drinking water by car, but only if people can do that every day. We must fix it.'

Al Itihad Al Afreakkee is a large secondary school near Sirte sea-front. Missiles have blown two large holes through its walls, and another in its ceiling. Unlike at some other schools, they have not caused serious structural damage, in part because it's a one-storey building.

The school has taken on 350 students from Haldoon, one of the two schools in the city which has been bombed into destruction. But its shell-holes are patched up with wooden board. All 144 of its windows are shattered, and 19 doors must be bought and hung.

The school staff fixed the plumbing enough for water to run, but Ali Hassan, the school's headmaster said: 'We have been told it's temporary only. We hope it will keep working, but at some point soon, we must replace it. There is no money for it, but the school needs water. It's winter. We have no windows, so the water comes in that way. Maybe, we can try to catch it as it does.'

He smiles, and shrugs. It's meant as a joke, but without assistance, it's not far from becoming the reality for the city's 19 open schools, and its 30,000 school children.



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Save the Children is the only humanitarian aid organisation based in the city of Sirte. Our emergency response team is working to ensure Sirte's children can return to education, as is their right under international law, in schools which are weatherproofed and safe, both structurally and hygienically.

We will use a donation of £5,000 to purchase replacement windows needed at one school, and their installation. £10,000 would purchase and replace all its windows and doors. A donation of £15,000 would see windows and doors replaced, and a school's plumbing system completely repaired.

There are 19 schools open in Sirte, and we are attempting to raise enough money to ensure none of them are overlooked.



3 Al Itihad Al Afreakke School, Sirte, 6 January 2012. The school has agreed to take students from a destroyed school elsewhere in Sirte. In other cities, its own damage would require it to remain closed



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