



At the Shell-funded Mayadeen Hospital



Teaching the skills for road safety at an early age



A work session at the AFPC Technical Study Centre, which is supported by Shell



Members of AFPC's road safety team with a speed gun

# Building on a DEEP COMMITMENT to Syrian society

Shell first engaged in exploration activities in Syria in 1949, and began production of hydrocarbons in the country with the formation in 1985 of Al Furat Petroleum Company (AFPC) - a joint venture between Shell, the Syrian Petroleum Company (SPC) and Bergomo (a joint venture between the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation of India and the China National Petroleum Corporation). Syria Shell is today the largest foreign investor in the country. However, business investments aside, the company has always worked with the Government to make a strong contribution to Syrian society, investing in a wide range of social initiatives - in education and training and the transfer of technology, in health and safety and in helping to preserve Syria's rich cultural heritage. 'Shell in the Middle East' goes to Syria to talk to Ghaleb Sleiman, Deputy General Manager and External Affairs Manager of Syria Shell Petroleum Development (SSPD), to find out more about Syria Shell's deep social commitments to Syria and its people... ▶

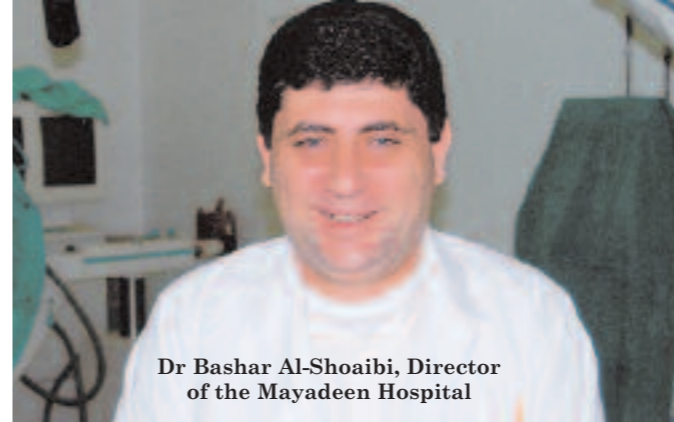


**Ghaleb Sleiman, Deputy General Manager and External Affairs Manager of SSPD**

**“SHELL HAS BEEN IN SYRIA SINCE THE COMPANY FIRST STARTED EXPLORATION IN 1949** and has, with its joint venture partner Al Furat Petroleum Company [AFPC], been producing oil and gas for over 20 years. During this period the creation of wealth for the country has been tremendous. Some of Shell’s share of this wealth has been directed towards a wide range of social initiatives, in HSE [health, safety & environment], in education and training and in the transfer of technology and learning,” says Ghaleb Sleiman, Deputy General Manager and External Affairs Manager of Syria Shell Petroleum Development (SSPD).  
 “This success could not have been achieved without the strong partnerships that have been developed

over the years between Shell and the Government of Syria, the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, the Syrian Petroleum Company [SPC] and many other Government bodies.  
 “We believe that the relationship Shell has with the Government and the Syrian people is mutually beneficial. Business investments aside, Syria Shell has been actively involved in the community, working with local partners to support many social and cultural projects.”  
 Ghaleb then goes on to explain, “In Mayadeen, a town close to AFPC’s area of oil and gas production operations, Shell - with Veba Petroleum - financed the construction of an 85-bed hospital to provide free medical treatment for the local community. Shell also provided

medical equipment for the hospital, and has funded the maintenance and cleaning of the hospital since its opening.  
 “In the near future Syria Shell will also be providing a CT scanner for the hospital, and this will make the lives of some local people a lot better as they will not need to travel long distances to other hospitals for CT scans.”  
 Ghaleb adds, “However, the supply of this scanner was delayed due to complications related to export controls imposed by the United States.”  
 Deir ez Zor is the Governorate in which AFPC’s operations are presently focused. It is also where Syria Shell has focused its social development activities, contributing to the development of local infrastructure, including the recent donation of US \$5 million to the local Government to assist in the further development of the Eastern Region, in line with the Government’s aspirations.  
 “In Deir ez Zor, Syria Shell has worked with the local municipality for many years now, assisting in community projects,” says Ghaleb. “Currently, we are working to develop the town’s waste management and disposal operations in an environmentally friendly manner through the provision of waste ▶



**Dr. Bashar Al-Shoaibi, Director of the Mayadeen Hospital**

**DR BASHAR AL-SHOAIBI**, Director of the Mayadeen Hospital, says, “The Mayadeen Hospital was opened in 2001. Apart from co-funding the construction of the hospital, with Veba Petroleum, Shell paid for all the equipment and furniture in the hospital, and today continues to provide the funds to maintain and clean the building and grounds.  
 “The hospital has both in- and out-patient facilities with 88 beds. During the course of a year we treat over 50,000 people. There are three operating theatres equipped with general anaesthetic facilities and one operating theatre for operations requiring only a local anaesthetic.  
 “The hospital is equipped to carry out most types of minor and major operations. In 2006 we carried out over 1,500 major operations and almost 2,500 minor operations. The majority of patients come here with such problems as broken bones, and for

the removal of cysts and benign tumours. We also see patients with cancer of the colon and those who require abdominal operations, for ulcers and cancer. In addition, we see quite a few patients with eye problems and some who require appendectomies.  
 “However, we do not perform cardiac operations, for which patients must go to Damascus, nor do we carry out neurological operations, for which patients have to go to Deir ez Zor. In the near future Shell will be providing us with a CT scanner, which will enable us to provide a much better service for our patients.  
 “The catchment area for this hospital includes Mayadeen City and the area around it, which means that the hospital serves in excess of 300,000 people. We are, in fact, the only hospital in the area, except for a maternity hospital in Mayadeen.  
 “Without Shell this hospital would not be here, so on behalf of the staff at the hospital and the people of the region I would like to thank Shell for

providing this facility. It is really good to see a foreign company making such a contribution to the people of Syria and I believe that Shell’s work here demonstrates its position as a world-leading company with a social conscience. I also hope that its example will be followed by other companies in Syria,” he concludes.



**A patient undergoing treatment at the Mayadeen Hospital**

**HSE is of paramount importance and at its operational headquarters at the Omar field in Deir ez Zor, AFPC has ambulance and fire crews on standby at all times**



**GHALEB SLEIMAN CONTINUED**

◀ transport vehicles, street sweepers and over 100 waste containers for public use.

“Also in Deir ez Zor, Syria Shell has been providing training to English language teachers in the local elementary schools to help them improve their English language teaching skills. We are co-operating with the Ministry of Education to extend this programme to include Damascus,” he says.

Road safety is a major issue in Syria as it is a country which suffers from a very high incidence of road traffic accidents.

“This is especially true in rural areas, such as Deir ez Zor,” says Ghaleb. “So Syria Shell has responded to the need for action by developing and managing a road safety awareness programme to target children in primary school grade five.

“We do this in co-operation with the Ministry of Education by sending Shell-contracted teachers to the local schools, where they use a range of teaching methods, including audio-visual equipment, specially printed teaching materials and practical exercises in the playgrounds and out on the roads.

“To date, over 15,000 children have received training through this programme and the number of road accidents involving children in the area has dropped dramatically.

“Furthermore, whilst road safety is also important for children, we recognise the importance of road safety training for all our staff, at both Shell and in AFPC, and we provide defensive driving courses for drivers and their spouses,” he adds.

“As part of our social commitment to education and learning Shell, through Bana, a non-government organisation, has provided support to blind children by sponsoring the printing of Braille books for the elementary, middle and



Nahed Attiya (left) and Samah Mikha, Road Safety Teachers

**“SAMAH MIKHA, FROM AFPC, AND I ARE CONTRACTED BY SHELL to teach road safety awareness in primary schools in the rural areas around Deir ez Zor, Mayadeen and Omar,”** says Nahed Attiya.

“Road safety is a major issue in Syria, especially in rural areas. In the past there have been a lot of accidents involving young children so Shell decided to start a road safety awareness campaign, targeting children in primary schools to make them more aware of the dangers and how to avoid them.

“Shell is working in co-operation with the Ministry of Education and we liaise with the Deir ez Zor office of the Ministry of Education to establish an annual plan of school visits.

secondary school curriculae. Meanwhile, another initiative has been rolled out to support the World Food Programme in its provision of food to schools, to encourage poor children to attend lessons,” says Ghaleb.

To ensure that Syrian National staff in AFPC are able to make the best possible use of the latest technology to develop Syria’s energy reserves, Shell sponsors a Technical Study Centre in Damascus. The focus of the Study Centre is to develop local

“In 2006 I visited 80 schools and made presentations to over 134 classes, which represented almost 4,000 students. This year, with the help of Samah, who has recently joined the programme, we intend to target over 150 schools.

“The road safety awareness programme encompasses a variety of learning issues for the students and includes teaching them how to get to school safely, how to cross the road, what dangers to look out for and how to behave on the road in the dark.

“As part of the programme we also provide each and every child with a colourful rucksack with a safety first logo and reflectors so they can be seen in the dark. In addition, if any of the children have bicycles we provide them with special reflectors which

expertise to carry out complex reservoir studies within the country.

Says, Ghaleb, “The work carried out at the Study Centre has already contributed to the discovery of new hydrocarbon reserves.”

He continues, “Also in support of our joint venture, AFPC, and our partner SPC, Shell has organised a number of technical and business-related workshops and conferences, both inside and outside Syria, to assist in the development and training of staff. In addition, Shell



Nahed explains to children how to cross the road safely and points out the dangers to look out for whilst doing so

they can glue on to their bikes.

“As a learning tool, and to generate more interest amongst the children, we also provide them with an interactive road safety awareness booklet and crayons. The booklet is not restricted solely to road safety and includes information on personal hygiene, how to save water and energy, how to look after the environment

organises visits to other Shell operating companies around the world, as well as providing cross-postings.”

Shell’s exploration activities in Syria have gone beyond oil and gas and Syria Shell has helped to explore both the history and culture of Syria, as well as its geological heritage.

“In the past Shell has backed an important archaeological dig at Tell Sabi Abyad, in co-operation with The Netherlands National Museum of Antiquities. We have

and keep their schools clean.

“We believe that the programme has been a success because there has been a major reduction in the number of accidents involving children. Indeed, the Governor of Deir ez Zor has commented on the value of the reflectors on the bags and bicycles and how they have prevented many accidents.

“Another interesting aspect of the

also supported the recent publication of two unique books [see over page]. The first of these, called ‘Treasures of the Earth’, charts a journey through Syria’s geological heritage and has been designed for the general public and not for specialists in the field. It has been distributed free of charge to help young people in schools, universities and other educational institutions learn about Syria’s rich geological history.

“The second book, which is entitled

programme is the way that children pass on the messages of road safety to their parents. In this way, the messages filter into the rest of the local communities. And, due to the success of this road safety campaign in Deir ez Zor, Syria, Shell is hoping to expand the programme, with the co-operation of the Ministry of Education, to schools in Damascus,” she concludes.

‘Highlights of the National Museum of Damascus’, is another historical expedition, but examines Syria’s fascinating archaeological discoveries. Syria has over 3,000 archaeological sites which have been discovered and investigated, whilst some 3,000 more sites have been identified but have yet to be uncovered and examined. This book has been published as a gift to the National Museum and is being sold to raise funds for the maintenance and development of ▶

**GHALEB SLEIMAN CONTINUED**

◀ the museum,” says Ghaleb.

Syria Shell is also looking forward to the launch of Shell’s LiveWire programme, known in the Middle East as the Intilaaqah programme, which is designed to train young entrepreneurs to establish and run their own businesses.

“This is a very meaningful programme in a country where many young people come on to the labour market every year,” he says. “This programme will go some way towards helping to create job opportunities.

“During the last 20 years Shell has

enjoyed a very healthy business environment and good business relationships here in Syria, which has led to the expansion of our business and has, more recently, led to the award of two new exploration blocks for Shell in Syria. So we hope that further new business opportunities will follow. We also hope to continue with our contributions to Syrian society, to its health and safety, and we would like to build on our deep commitment to the Government of Syria and the Syrian people for a long time to come,” Ghaleb concludes. **S**



Sponsored by Shell and PetroCanada, and launched under the patronage of the Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, ‘Treasures of the Earth’ is a scientific and cultural reference book that provides invaluable data on Syria’s fascinating geology.

Information, photographs and statistics have been contributed by the Syrian Petroleum Company, the Remote Sensing General Organisation, the Ministries of Telecommunications, Defence and Culture, the Geology & Mineral Resources Public Institute and the General Directorate for Antiquities & Museums.

Published in both Arabic and English, the book has been gifted to all Syrian Ministries, universities, public schools, cultural and scientific centres and public libraries

Also sponsored by Shell and PetroCanada, and launched under the patronage of the Minister of Culture, the book, ‘Highlights of the National Museum of Damascus’, has been offered to the National Museum as an expression of appreciation of the exquisite array of artefacts and displays that represent the cultures and beauty of the country’s many eras and civilisations, from Prehistoric and Ancient Syria through to the Classical, Arab and Islamic periods.

The book has been published with the co-operation and input of the Ministry of Culture, the General Directorate for Antiquities & Museums and the staff who work at the National Museum

**“FOR AFPC, HSE [HEALTH, SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT] IN THE FIELD** is of prime importance, and the success which we have had with our HSE programme has been reflected by AFPC’s recent achievement of 16.2 million man hours without any LTIs [Lost Time Incidents],” reports Abdul Hakim Zaher, Head of HSE at AFPC.

“This is a world record for any operating unit within the Shell Group or its joint ventures, and I believe that the reason for this success is that over the years we have developed a very strong culture of HSE with an intense focus on safety performance.

“Here at AFPC, safety performance is driven from the field operations centres at our three main bases, at Thayyem, Tanak and Omar. As a result, we are continuously in touch with all aspects of HSE and the field managers can manage the issues of HSE in a much more proactive way rather than just reacting to incidents after they have happened. In other words, the real secret of our success in HSE is that we have senior managers in the field and not just at head office, so this maintains a strong HSE focus on the job.

“Here at AFPC we have been very lucky to have Shell as a partner and to have been able to adopt Shell’s HSE management policy and systems throughout the company. We have learned a lot from Shell which I am sure has helped benefit AFPC’s HSE performance,” says Abdul Hakim.

Hassan Al Issa, Head of Road Safety, AFPC, goes on to say, “There have been major changes in some aspects of HSE, such as in road safety. Many years ago the ‘macho’ culture discouraged people from wearing seat belts. Today we have seen a cultural shift and now it is ‘cool’ to wear a seat belt, and this behaviour has permeated outside the company



**From left: Abdul Hakim Zaher, Head of HSE in the field, Dr Amin Asaad, Head of Occupational Health in the field, and Hassan Al Issa, Head of Road Safety, AFPC**

and into the local community.

“AFPC has a tough road safety policy with strict speed limits, which are enforced by the use of our own speed control teams. These teams use radar and speed guns to monitor the speed of AFPC and contractor vehicles in our operating areas, and drivers who exceed the speed limit face warning letters followed by financial penalties.

“We spend a lot of time in driver training and we provide defensive driving courses, which all AFPC drivers

must attend. We also have a range of training equipment which includes roll-over simulators to illustrate what it is like to be in a vehicle when it turns over in an accident. And we have a seat belt simulator which demonstrates the effects and impact of a vehicle hitting a stationary object at low speeds,” Hassan concludes.

Dr Amin Asaad, Head of Occupational Health in the field, AFPC, continues, “Occupational Health is very important to AFPC. We have several clinics throughout our operating areas, which are supported by a team of medics and an ambulance. For major issues and treatment we use hospitals at Deir ez Zor and Mayadeen. Our clinics carry out

comprehensive medical checks on all staff, every year if they are in the field, or every two years if they are in administrative jobs.

“We are now also implementing Shell’s Minimum Health Standard Policy, which will include all AFPC contractors, as well as AFPC staff. These standards cover a wide range of issues, such as hygiene at catering and accommodation facilities, the lighting of work stations, the use of personal protective equipment, such as safety boots, hard hats, gloves and eye protection, and many other issues.

“On site at the main Omar field base we have a residential compound of 200 apartments for local staff and their families, which we call the Green Village. Here we have a school, shopping and recreation centres, a mosque and a swimming pool. We have also built a new medical centre to provide onsite medical treatment for all staff and their families. In addition, we provide general health education on such issues as diet, safety and exercise.

“In Syria AFPC is seen as a leader in the world of HSE and most other national companies are a long way behind us in terms of HSE. So AFPC is like a light leading the way, providing support and training to other companies,” Dr Amin concludes.



**Tools for road safety training: safety belt and accident roll-over simulators**