

Social Work

in the face of crises and disasters

Part 1: A case study - Lebanon in the years between 1975-1990 and after the August 4th explosion

Part 2: A brief review of some social workers' field experiences in Lebanon during 1975-1990 war



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Contents

Acknowledgment and Appreciation	6
Part 1	8
A case study	
Lebanon Between the years 1975-1990 and after the Beirut Explosion, 4th of August 2020	8
Introduction:	10
General Research Objectives:	11
The Applied Methodology:	11
The first part of the research	13
(1975-1990) The stage of the Lebanese war	13
The Lebanese reality during this period	13
Problems, difficulties, and basic needs during this period	16
Social work during this period	18
The second part of the research	23
(after the August 4th 2020 explosion)	23
The Lebanese reality	23
Problems and difficulties	24
Social work during this period	25
Conclusions and suggestions	27
Part 2	30
A brief review of some social workers' field experiences	30
During the 1975-1990 war	30
Introduction:	31
1. Experience through the "Centre de Protection Maternelle et Infantile" - karantina	34
2. Experience through the "Restos du Cœur Association"	34

3. Experiences through the “Mouvement Social	35
4. Experiences through “Caritas Liban”	36
5. Experience through the “Lebanese Red Cross Center-Mreijeh”	38
6. Experience through the “Social Development Center” –SDC Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) - Borj El-Barajneh	38
7. Experiences through the “Service de l’Enfant au Foyer” SEF	39
8. Experience through the “Young Men Christian Association” YMCA	40
9. Experience through the “Middle East Council of Churches” MECC	41
10. Experience through the “Institut de Rééducation Audio-Phonétique” IRAP	41
11. Experience through the “Soins Infirmiers et Développement Communautaire” - SIDC	42
12. Experience through the “Centre de Protection Maternelle et Infantile” of the Sisters of Charity - Karm El Zeitoun	43
13. Experience of two educational cadres, each individually through the “Ecole Libanaise de Formation Sociale-Université Saint-Joseph” - ELFS-USJ	44
14. Experience through the “Ecole Libanaise de Formation Sociale-Université Saint-Joseph” - ELFS-USJ	45
15. Experience through the “NGOs Platform of Saida”	46
16. Experience through the “Rabieh Garden Club”	47
17. Experience through the “Service Social pour le Bien-être de l’Enfant au Liban” SESOBEL	48
18. Experience through Multiple center to shelter the displaced in Ouzai, and the southern suburb of Beirut	49
19. Experience through “Terre des Hommes-Lausanne”	49
20. Experience through the “Hôpital Psychiatrique de la Croix” - Bqennaya	50
21. Experience through “Dar al-Amal Association”	50
22. Experience through the “Union pour la Protection de l'Enfance au Liban” - UPEL	51
23. Experience through the “Centre Social pour Handicapés Physiques de Guerre” – MOSA - Sin el-Fil	51
24. Experience through socio-pastoral work in the northern Bekaa region	52
Conclusion	54
List of acronyms قائمة المختصرات	55
References المراجع	56

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Part 1

A case study

Lebanon Between the years 1975-1990

and after the Beirut Explosion,

4th of August 2020

The research in this report was conducted as part of the Higher Education Dialogue project “Refugees, Host Communities and the Sustainable Development Goals 2019-2020” and published finalized as part of the German Arab Transformation Partnership project “International Social Work Acting in Crises – Attitude Matters (AttiMa) 2021-2022”.

This project aims at fostering the resilience of International Social Workers and adequately preparing them for their future work. It does so by on the one hand researching collaboratively about the realities on the ground Social Workers are facing and learning from their experience. On the other it implements intercultural, exchange and collaborative learning in this field with trainings in conflict transformation, mindful based intercultural communication, resilience and community building and thus transforming higher education in Germany, Jordan and Lebanon. Both projects were funded by the DAAD with funds from the Federal Foreign Office of Germany and headed by Prof. Hannah Reich and assisted by the research assistant, Lisa Mends, Technical University of Applied Science Würzburg- Schweinfurt (THWS)

Introduction:

The role of social work in international contexts was investigated by the collaborative of the Faculty of Applied Social Sciences of the Technical University of Applied Sciences Würzburg-Schweinfurt (THWS), with different universities in Lebanon since 2018.

The explosion of August 4th, 2020 destroyed the Port of Beirut and great parts of the capital and caused damages stretching dozens of kilometers, and it led to human losses exceeding the thousands: The deaths of more than 212 persons and 6500 injured with wounds or permanent disabilities. Approximately 7700 homes were destroyed, leaving more than 300 thousand of Beirut's population homeless. It is worth pointing out that most of the people who were made homeless because of the explosion have still not returned to their homes.

In the process the project team were confronted with the harsh impact of the Beirut explosion, the suffering and the repercussions for the Lebanese society. Furthermore, the team also wanted to acknowledge the tremendous capacities of the Lebanese civil society actors to constructively respond. The research was requested and led by Hyam Samaha Kahi and Aimée Ghanem, long-standing partners of THWS. And it happened that the idea of the research was in lines with THWS project. This will make sure that this practical, experience based knowledge would be collected to be inserted into future Social Work education, resources were made available to conduct a research on Lebanese social work in crisis situations. The study looks on the aftermath of the explosion as well as scrutinising it from a historical perspective. It was done on the one hand in cooperation with social workers from the organisation "Berrad El Hay", who had been active in the emergency work being done in one of the most affected neighbourhoods of Beirut. On the other hand it aimed to look at the previous experience of Social Workers in crisis, particular the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990), which was very much evoked by this tremendous explosion, and the stages that followed. Thus experiences and initiatives of social workers in this time period were scrutinised by interviews with Lebanese social work pioneers. These findings were then compared with the experiences from the social interventions after the August 4th explosion in Beirut.

This research began in April 2020 and was divided into two parts. The first part attempted to extract field experiences by way of semi-structured qualitative research interviews with 35 "social workers" about their experiences in periods of war and security incidents and about their experiences during their practicing of their tasks. In particular, the period extending from 1975 to 1990 was prolonged. The stages that followed between the years 1990-2020, which were permeated with many security incidents, as well as economic, social and life crises, will be addressed at a later point.

The second part concentrated on documenting field experiences from the four months that followed the August 4th explosion, and on observing the opinions of social workers working in a number of the social institutions which were active in the aforementioned area at the time.

In the following, we will address the general research objectives and the applied methodology. Then, we will deal with the first part of the research which covers the period between 1975 to 1990. Thereupon, we will present the second part which deals with the period after the explosion of August 4th, 2020, and we will end with general conclusions and suggestions.

General Research Objectives:

This paper aims to identify the most prominent events that Lebanon has gone through during the years 1975-1990 and after the explosion of August 4th, 2020, events which have had an effect on social work. It also aims to infer the means of work that the social workers resorted to, as well as to identify the field experiences that they obtained in the face of security incidents, social and economic crises, and the life tragedies that followed. Furthermore, the study aims to shed light on the interaction of the social workers with the lived reality and the challenges that they faced, in order to preserve the methodologies, principles and professional foundations from their field practicing.

The Applied Methodology:

In the first part of the study, the methodology was based upon:

- The reading of documents, references and studies on the raised subject
- Initial meetings with a large number of concerned people with the aim of determining those key informants with whom interviews would be conducted later, dependent on the changes that would happen with them.
- Semi-structured interviews with 35 “social workers” who were chosen based on the year of obtaining the social work certificate (before 1990), the type of work done by the institutions within which they practiced social work, and their involvement in relief work depending on the geographical area in which they worked. The purpose of this was to target the largest possible number of geographical areas. The research coordinator’s 44 consecutive years of field experience (between the years 1970-2014) contributed to shedding further light on the lived reality. It is worth mentioning that we paused at some of the most prominent achievements of those with whom we conducted interviews. We tried to collect and document these accomplishments with honesty and faithfulness in accordance with what they conveyed to us.

The interviews were conducted with “specialized social workers”. These are the people who practice the profession of social work on the basis of a certificate recognized by one of the existing colleges and institutes in Lebanon that are licensed by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Lebanon. The term “social workers”, or “social worker”, is used in this study.

We would like to stress here that it is definitely not our intention to give preference to one group over another. Rather, our choice came out of us being more familiar with the reality of “social work” on the one hand and, on the other, due to us not being able to fully grasp all the different specialities, practices and qualifications of the rest of the social workers. And all of us know that social work is a message first and foremost, and the first test of it is the degree of commitment shown to human dignity and rights and the ability to offer

the human being the appropriate services with complete respect for professional and humanitarian ethics.

It is necessary to mention some of the difficulties and obstacles which we faced:

- The difficulty in reaching the concerned persons due to the changes that occurred with the key informants and due to some of them leaving the country.
- The difficulty in getting in contact with people and the difficulty in narrowing down the institutions and organizations which had initiatives during the specific period of time. We apologize in advance to all those with whom we were not able to get in contact.
- The difficulty of reaching resources and documents due to security measures related to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The lack of available time for research.

In the second part of the research, the methodology focused on:

- The reading of documents, resources and studies on the topic.
- The conducting of semi-structured interviews with a number of social workers who accompanied the relief work after the August 4th explosion in the area of Mar Mikhael-Gemmayzeh. 12 interviews were conducted.

With regard to both parts of the study, the interviews were initially conducted face to face. However, due to the spread of Covid-19, interviews were continued by way of electronic means of communication. Each interview was sound recorded (with the consent of the persons concerned), and the interviews lasted between 45-60 minutes from which information was extracted and analysed afterwards.

The first part of the research

(1975-1990) The stage of the Lebanese war

In the following, we will treat the stage of the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990). Through that, we will attempt to infer field experiences within the field of social work in order to confront the despairs of war, displacement and indiscriminate bombing. In later studies, we will treat what came after the end of the war up until the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri (1990-2005), which is the phase of the Lebanese society and the governmental and civilian institutions attempting to rise from the repercussions of the war. We will also later treat the stage from the Syrian withdrawal up until the August 4th explosion (2005-2020) which is a phase that was permeated with many events.

The Lebanese reality during this period

The Lebanese war began on April 13th, 1975, and lasted 15 years. The war witnessed rounds of internal armed conflicts, foreign military interventions, invasions which led to the killing of more than 150.000 people, displacement of a million Lebanese citizens within Lebanon, the disappearance of 17.000 Lebanese people, and losses estimated at 25 billion dollars. This led to the internal displacement of 21% of the Lebanese population and to the emigration of around a million Lebanese people. In addition to that, other tragedies resulted from the war, such as identity killings, forced migration, families being made homeless and dispersed, mothers being widowed, children being orphaned, rise of unemployment rates, causing of physical disabilities, mental illnesses, and the emigration of young people (Kassir, 2018).

The Lebanese civil war is divided into four stages between 1975-1990. In the following are some of the prominent events from the period before the civil war and during it:

Before the civil war (Kamal Salibi, 1976):

The Lebanese state came into being in 1920 following the repercussions of the period after the First World War (1914-1918). The state of Greater Lebanon was declared on September 1st, 1920, and was placed under French mandate.

Lebanon gained its independence in stages within the context of the Second World War (1939-1945), and what is known as the National Pact laid the foundation for the Lebanese system. The Independent Lebanese Republic witnessed attempts of building institutions and witnessed the repercussions of regional conflicts as well, i.e., the Nakba, with the first wave of the exodus of 100.000 Palestinians in 1948 and the establishment of the first camps around the main cities.

The Lebanese system failed in managing its social, political, and economic affairs, and internal tensions along with the repercussions of regional conflicts and Cold War politics led to the outbreak of the first civil war in the 21st century in the summer of 1975.

With the ascension of Chehab to the presidency, the period of building modern institutions in Lebanon began, and the "Irfed" mission (Lambert, 1968) was commissioned to study the economic and social reality in Lebanon. It is worth pointing out that most of Lebanon's state institutions date back to this period. Lebanon witnessed a unique economic growth as well as attempts of social modernization and the expansion of the middle class. A study carried out by the Irfed mission, which was led by Father Lebret, warned against the dangers of not carrying out reforms and of not adopting policies of balanced growth and against the internal conflicts which could arise from this.

Chehabism was not capable of limiting the influence of sectarian leaderships, and the Arabic defeat in 1967, i.e., the Naksa, led to the arrival of a second wave of Palestinian refugees, along with their weapons, just as it led to a rise in the level of tension at the domestic level. Within the context of this reality, the Lebanese state entered into the Cairo Agreement in 1969 which permitted Palestinian military action to take place from within Lebanese territory.

The countdown to the outbreak of war began against the backdrop of internal divide over the identity and history of Lebanon, the nature of the political system, Palestinian asylum, and the rates of the big economic and social inequality. A period of mutual internal armament began and lasted from 1969 until the outbreak of the war on April 13th, 1975 (Traboulsi, 2012).

On the one hand, the clashes took the form of civil war between the Lebanese themselves, while, on the other hand, the violence encompassed hostile actions between Lebanese Christians and Palestinians.

The first stage: Internal conflict (1975-1978) (Hervet Amiot, 2020)

The Lebanese civil war began in Beirut in April 1975 as an armed conflict between the Lebanese Phalanges and Palestinian factions. The spiral of violence took the form of guerrilla warfare in urban areas (assassinations, ambushes, street battles) which later ignited the conflict in whole country, starting from Beirut. This first period witnessed the Battle of the Hotels, the Two-Year War, and the intervention of the Syrian Deterrence Forces in 1976.

The fighting led to the destruction of downtown Beirut which indicated the death of the city and of the Lebanese economic and political model. This also led to the division of Beirut into East Beirut and West Beirut, which were separated by what is known the Green Line.

The balance of power during this period was in favour of the National Movement and its Palestinian allies. However, the intervention of the Deterrence Forces, which numbered 300.000 Syrian soldiers, limited their progress.

The second stage: The invasions (1978-1982)

This period of the Lebanese civil war witnessed enormous military invasions, the first of those being Operation Litani or the first Israeli invasion. The operation lasted six days. The intensity of the fighting and its impact on civilians, in addition to Lebanese diplomatic

efforts, led the United Nations Security Council to issue Resolutions 425 and 426, which called for the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from Lebanon and for the establishment of the INIFIL (the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon), which is still active in its peace-keeping mission in South Lebanon.

Also, this phase witnessed sectarian massacres that aimed to create areas with specific sectarian identities and to create a new sectarian geography.

In the summer of 1982, the second Israeli invasion or Operation Peace for Galilee began which led to the siege of Beirut with the objective of expelling the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) from the city. Urban neighbourhoods were heavily bombed by the Israeli army, and there were many civilian casualties. The operation ended with PLO leaving the city while the Multinational Forces entered Beirut on a peacekeeping mission.

Following the first and second invasion, Israel had occupied approximately 10% of the area of Lebanon, and this occupation continued until 2000.

The third stage: Divide and petty states (1982-1988)

The divide of Lebanon turned into small sectarian semi-states. Bachir Gemayel was elected president of the republic in August 1982 before he was assassinated ten days after taking office. This period witnessed the Mountain War which resulted in mutual massacres between Christians and the Druze in the south of Mount Lebanon in 1982 along with Christians being driven away from these parts of Mount Lebanon towards Christian controlled areas. Likewise, fights broke out east of Sidon in 1984-1985 and in Tripoli between 1983-1985. During this period, the sectarian divide reached its climax, and militias imposed themselves as an alternative to the state in semi-closed sectarian enclaves. The consecutive rounds of fighting intensified the social crises.

The fourth stage: The end of the war (1988-1990):

Within the context of the crisis of choosing a new president for the republic, the Commander of the Army, Michel Aoun, was appointed head of an interim government which was semi-recognized in the Christian areas, while in West Beirut recognition of Selim Hoss' government continued.

On March 14th, 1989, General Michel Aoun and the forces of the Lebanese Army, which were under his command, began a unilaterally declared "liberation war" against all foreign forces in Lebanon directed exclusively against the Syrians. This war had dire consequences and did not manage to make any progress. With the end of the Cold War, efforts to end the Lebanese war turned into an internal peace project which was translated into action by inviting 62 Members of Parliament (those who had survived out of the 99 representatives who had been elected in 1972) to meet in the city of Taif in Saudi Arabia. On September 30th, 1989, what is known as the National Accord Document was reached, and the constitution of 1943 was amended.

The Taif Agreement formed the beginning of the Lebanese national reconciliation process with active support from Syria, the Arab states, and the international community. However, before the implementation of the Taif Agreement, another war broke out on

January 30th, 1990, between the Lebanese Forces and divisions of the Lebanese Army which was under the command of General Michel Aoun. This war was militarily inconclusive and led to the worsening of the miserable social reality of life in Lebanon. With the fall of the presidential palace in Baabda on October 13th, 1990, the Lebanese Civil War ended with Syria occupying 90% of Lebanon's territory and Israel 10% (Amiot, 2020)

The consequences of the war, with all the tragedies and the destruction, both material and moral, that it left behind, were many and varied. Perhaps the moral destruction had a greater impact and was more painful because its restoration was more difficult and took longer time.

Problems, difficulties, and basic needs during this period

In the face of this situation, social work had to deal with and adapt to a new reality where many social institutions had stopped performing their usual roles. The notion of social work entered into the whirlpool of quick and instantaneous relief work in response to the multifaceted needs and problems which presented themselves on the ground. Perhaps the issue of the displaced people was among the problems that had multiple social, psychological, economic, and life-pertaining consequences, and it was necessary for the social workers to quickly deal with these at the time.

In its first stages, the relief work revolved around the following: sheltering of displaced individuals as well as whole families in schools, churches, mosques; organization and distribution of basic aid, including food, drink, and medicine; care for exposed groups such as children, the elderly, and pregnant women; and other primary relief work.

In addition, during periods of bombing of civilian neighbourhoods, many social workers, along with local volunteers, were working in neighbourhoods exposed to danger inside the shelters where residents gathered to escape the bombings which would sometimes continue for several days. They took care of the children, organized the communal life in the shelter, secured the arrival of drinking water, bread and medicine, and they handled waste and other ordinary matters of life. All that took place under difficult security conditions which prevented movement and contact between neighbourhoods and forced many to stay in their houses or in shelters for long periods. The role of social workers was prominent during this period.

After the initial relief work came the second stage of it which centred around the organizing of communal life in the displaced groupings places (be that schools, churches, mosques, or public places), and the preparing of these places to be able to receive families in a suitable way that would respect the simplest means of living, including toilets, shared kitchens, and the partition of living spaces in a manner that would respect each family's privacy. Likewise, the work focused on helping them getting to know the new geographical surroundings, accompanying them in facilitating matters of life, taking care of cases of depression, desperation, and psychological symptoms, dealing with conflicts, violence, and child abuse, particularly inside groupings places, as well as on helping the rest of the displaced groups.

Based on what May Hazzaz mentions in her article "Le travailleur social et les situations d'urgence"(1985) ("The social worker and cases of emergency"), the **third stage** of the relief work can be considered the "stage of coming out of war and attempting to return to normal life". In her article, Hazzaz demonstrates the three stages which characterize "the social intervention in cases of emergency resulting from catastrophes". The first stage, which follows immediately after the catastrophe, is represented by a state of panic, alarm, and confusion, and it centres on the work of evacuation and sheltering. The second stage of relief work comprises the organizing of communal life in the short term. The third stage is represented by long-time reorganization and by the material, moral, and psychological rebuilding of the damaged families and communities along with helping them regain their normal lives.

For more information on this period, we will in the following present the study undertaken by The Center for Applied Studies in Social Sciences (IESSA) **in 1987** within the framework of a collaborative program between Saint Joseph University of Beirut (the College of Humanities and the Lebanese School of social work) and Université Laval, Quebec, Canada (the Faculty of Humanities and Literature and the School of Social Work at Université Laval). The study dealt with the "Internal displacement in Lebanon as a result of the war" ("Les populations déplacées par la guerre au Liban"), and it considered the displaced person as someone who had been forced to leave his home after January 1st, 1975, due to the security situation, and who had not yet returned to his home at the time when the study was being conducted.

This study lasted for four years between 1987 to 1991 and dealt with approximately 62.000 families, equivalent to 3 million people, from among the Lebanese population. The study had more than one purpose. In addition to finding out the size of the problem of the displaced persons and identifying their reality, it was also necessary to find out the reality of the aid that various governmental, local, and international institutions and organizations provided. Furthermore, it was necessary to draw up clear plans of action to treat their situation.

The percentage of displaced people at the time was estimated at 18,5%, or approximately one fifth of the Lebanese population. A little less than half of them had been subjected to forced migration as a result of acts of violence, while the rest of them had fled from areas exposed to danger or due to them being unwanted. The majority of them belonged to the middle and lower social classes. All the displaced persons in the study voiced their fear for the future, as well as the need for a source of income and for permanent housing that would secure them stability. They also expressed the necessity of ensuring education for their children and of helping them confront their health problems.

On top of that comes the situation that many people went through due to losing a beloved or a relative or as a result of them being forcefully removed from their villages and areas and their social environment, along with the difficulty of reaching out for a helping hand and asking for sympathy which, in particular, was suffered by the elderly among the displaced people.

It is evident from the mentioned study that the “extended family” formed the first pillar of support in critical cases. Likewise, friends and people coming from the same area from which they had been driven away, and who after their displacement gathered within communities in specific geographical areas, constituted another pillar of support.

It is worth mentioning that the social and economic problems reached all social classes in Lebanon at the time (even those who had not been displaced), especially the poor and middle class, and everyone came to have the same worries.

The displaced persons mentioned more than 50 social institutions that were on the scene during this period. International organizations did not exceed 15% at the time. The study showed the views of those responsible for the social institutions on the needs and real-life problems during this stage. The study had a positive impact and formed the point of departure for many projects in the public and private sector.

Social work during this period

The period between **1975 to 1990** was rich with individual and collective initiatives, and many social institutions – and via them the social workers working in them – were forced to coexist with reality. In what follows are some of the initiatives that we arrived at through the interviews that we conducted with a number of the social workers who did not leave the arena of social work during the years of the war despite difficulties and challenges. They serve as an example of much of the work that many others besides them have done, work that in its entirety was the “balm” that contributed to alleviating the weight of the war and its misfortunes.

What distinguished all the key informants with their different affiliations was that they rose to perform their vital role in helping unconditionally. They defied the psychological, territorial, and sectarian barriers, and most of the interviewed stated that there was much coordination and cooperation between them. The most important challenges thrown upon or faced by the social workers during this period revolved around problems of life and relief work for periods of time which many thought would be temporary, but were prolonged, and thus the suffering prolonged.

However, the reality of the sectarian and partisan war weighed heavily on some of the social initiatives and projects which did not yield the desired results. At times, rulers with political and partisan backgrounds would be behind the establishment and financing of these initiatives so as to exercise control over the weaker groups of society during the war.

Despite the safety situation, there were many meetings and much communication between the social workers for the purpose of cooperation, sharing and adjusting work. We do not deny that some social workers occasionally slipped, even if only for a short time, into the pitfalls of insularity and intolerance where they rejected the other and held him responsible for the violence. This could either be due to direct reasons from which these social workers had suffered personally, such as the loss of a beloved or a relative or due to being exposed to direct acts of violence, or it could be because of political reasons and partisan or sectarian affiliations which, at times, could be oppressive. However, those

reasons would quickly evaporate when these social workers found themselves in front of tragedies and sufferings that did not differentiate between one person and the other, regardless of their affiliations and beliefs.

As we have mentioned earlier, there were many positive initiatives that had been confronted with these pitfalls and that attempted to keep control over partisan and sectarian affiliations. They worked on the frontlines in silence and with devotion, while adhering to their principles and professional ethics. Most of them, however, stayed behind the scenes, and they must be highlighted out of respect for the sacrifices that they made.

Here we pause at a letter sent by the late Archbishop Grégoire Haddad (1988) who founded the Social Movement in Lebanon, and who inspired many social projects of a developmental character. Likewise, he had many initiatives and projects within the field of social work, both during and after the civil war. His letter, which he wrote by hand and sent to many social workers in the midst of the war, had a great and influential impact in rectifying social work.

The interviews which we conducted with 35 social workers and the field experiences that they shared with us – and for which we are grateful – allow us to extract some thoughts, opinions, and data. Regarding the period between **1975 to 1990**, the efforts of most of the social institutions focused on programs of relief work in its three phases. From one point of view, they did so to secure the basic needs of the many families that had been forced to flee. From another, they did so to help the families and individuals who had been afflicted by the woes of the wars and catastrophes that hit Lebanon one after the other, and which had produced various social and economic problems. These problems included both those problems that had already been present in the country, and which, along with their impact on society, were made worse by the war, as well as the problems that were a direct result of the wars and security events and the conditions they left behind. They touched different aspects of life and living and were, in particular, embodied by the large numbers of widowers and orphans, the loss of the provider of the family, loss of housing, possessions and sources of income, and permanent disabilities, along with many psychological problems such as fear, desperation, worry, feelings of instability, the turning to painkillers and often also alcohol and drugs.

In addition to all that are the problems that arose due to the suspension of studies and school dropouts and the subsequent loss that this caused for children and parents alike. The events left behind a void within groups of youth who were exposed to all kinds of delinquency, and many minors were forced to work from an early age. Additionally, there were problems with the disruption, shortcomings, or even absence of official departments and governmental institutions.

Naturally, these problems had a more severe impact on low-income families and on the poor and below-average social classes, and even on middle class.

Faced with this reality, the workers in the field of social work had to take a side and had to work starting out from the professionalism which they must abide by. One of the most important methodologies of social work in this period was the activation of natural

support networks (the extended family, neighbours, and friends. This network is strongly present in Lebanese society and had a main role in overcoming many difficulties), as well as the activation of institutional support networks (institutions and organizations) and community-based support networks (the local committees which were formed in neighbourhoods and in the groupings places).

Here we must mention some of the questions that were thrown upon all those who accompanied the displaced families:

- Should we help the displaced people to adapt to the environment to which they have fled, with our prior knowledge of the potentially negative psychological effects that this decision might have, regardless of the economic and social effects?
- Or should we help them to stay temporarily while waiting to return home, even though returning home is related to matters that might be long-term, and work to improve their temporary situation with all the anxiety and instability related to such a situation?

Most of the key informants agreed on the importance of the relief work that accompanied this period. As one of the social worker said: "They had to secure the basic needs quickly and directly, but it is work that must remain circumstantial and exceptional, even though it is repeated in several stages and with different social groups, depending on the security events and the cycles of violence that followed one after the other..."

There is no doubt that the social institutions during this period gained solid experience in the field of "social intervention in emergency cases" and in "cases of disasters and shock", either through direct field work or through the many training courses that accompanied this work from several directions.

After a short period, however, many of these institutions and the workers within them wanted to move away from this work method, as one of the social workers said: "It is necessary to look for more effective development programs that can bring social work out the cycle of situational relief work and contribute to forging a vision of a "life project" for individuals and families, at least in the short and medium-long run, if not in the long run. ... As well as social, educational, and developmental programs that aspire to enable people to confront the future. ... and activating the resources of the social environment to suit the needs..."

For many of them, as stated in one of the interviews: "Relief work creates situations of dependency and obligation if it is not tied to work in the middle-long and long term with an educational vision that aims to restore the ability of individuals and families to be in control and manage their affairs..."

The majority of them think that: "It is very important to join forces in order to ensure requirements of life in a way that respects the rights of all those with whom we work, and we look forward to the return of life to state institutions and the state apparatus." Some of them mentioned that: "Without this cohesion, social work remains ineffective. Even though it responds to some of the immediate needs, the results of the work are much less than the goals set for it and the expenses allocated for it."

Everyone unanimously agreed on the necessity of: "An integrated and comprehensive vision that takes into consideration all the facts, whereby matters are anticipated and their causes dealt with and [whereby] they do not drown in the collection of results " - "and the necessity of the return of the state and its institutions".

Everyone emphasized "the need for clear social policies based on principles of social justice and on the rights of individuals, communities, and the public interest...", and many of the interviewed focused on "laws that protect marginalized groups..." - "and practical measures that ensure that these rights are translated into reality..." - "and clear and simple working mechanisms that each individual can resort to and make use of with its available possibilities...", and "that there be within in civil society the role of instigator, observer and partner, and that the common interest prevails...".

There was almost consensus on the importance of endowing oneself with professional foundations and principles, including "the importance of respect for the privacy of individuals and communities and their right to self-determination, and [the importance of] strengthening their abilities with the goal of identifying their problems and taking the proper decisions and helping them carry them out, and the importance of partnership between the service provider and the beneficiary...".

In any case: "Complete respect for human dignity, whereby the human being is not only looked at from the perspective of the problems that he suffers from, but is also looked at from the perspective of the possibilities within him that already exist or that can be developed, highlighted and strengthened...".

During this period, many workers, and especially those who were the first, fought diligently to defend social issues and to defend the struggle for these matters. They fought to build community institutions and, despite the difficulty of it, to support governmental institutions which alone can ensure work's continuity and inclusivity.

Perhaps the clearest summary of field work in emergency situations was that which was expressed by one of the social workers at the end of field work stage in one of the neighbourhoods affected by bombings and acts of violence during the war. She mentions: "The necessity of social work being independent from partisan, political and military work; a dynamic identification of needs and the distribution of tasks and responsibilities in advance; respect for privacy and for not putting people in situations where they have to ask for sympathy; respect for the right to self-determination and involving them in the relief work process; the activation of all the existing expertise and possibilities in the immediate environment.

It is important to deal with the conflicts that may arise between the beneficiaries, as well as between the volunteers, and to listen positively to these conflicts, which become more intense as the violence and destruction become more intense, to always seek common ground, and to accept the other".

Here we must pause at the phenomenon of the fatigue of the social organizations and institutions from war and relief work. Many of them stopped their work which, in turn,

caused many of the “social workers” and those who, at the time, were called “social workers” to stop working and leave the battlefield of social work without them passing on their knowledge. Some of them left the country, some retired, and some died. Along with them disappeared years of accumulated experience and years of hard work of trying to defend humanitarian matters and of fighting for turning charitable social work into institutional social work based on social rights and humanitarian principles.

This caused a big gap in the history of the profession of social work which the newer generations may not have felt, but which however did leave a great void for the many who had lived through the pre-war period and the beginnings of social work, and it is very important to document this period through the people who lived with it.

The second part of the research (after the August 4th 2020 explosion)

The Lebanese reality

Before the explosion of the Port of Beirut, Lebanon was going through an unparalleled severe economic crisis, as political, geo-regional, and social crises followed one after the other. Living conditions had worsened, and the purchasing power of citizens had fallen to its lowest level.

On September 10th, 2021, the Lebanese leadership formed a new government after a period of 13 months of vacancy of executive power and of unfitting political responses in face of complicated crises. It is the biggest economic and financial crisis in the country during peace time. In all probability, the economic and financial crisis in Lebanon ranks in the global top ten, or perhaps the top three, of the most severe economic crises since the nineteenth century.

The monetary and financial unrest has continued to fuel the conditions of the crisis. The exchange rate has deteriorated quicker during the past six months where the rate of the Lebanese Pound to the US dollar has fallen by an enormous percentage.

Different areas of Lebanon witnessed popular protests during 2019 that demanded getting back the looted funds and demanded the leaving of the ruling class. Furthermore, the burdens left behind by the Covid-19 pandemic have made numerous hospitals in Lebanon suffer from a lack of medical supplies, and they have become almost unable to receive patients, as well as many institutions being unable to pay the wages of employees and having to lay off a large part of them due to the comprehensive economic crisis that the country is witnessing.

Amid all these crises that have burdened the Lebanese people and drained all their energy, the explosion of Beirut came as a fatal blow. In the afternoon of Tuesday August 4th, 2020, an enormous explosion - called "Beirutshima" in analogy to what happened in Hiroshima due to the nuclear explosion - rang out in the Port of Beirut, which led to massive damages in the port and the shattering of glass facades of buildings and homes across all neighbourhoods of the Lebanese capital Beirut.

The explosion extended to houses and buildings located 10 kilometres away from the site of the blast. According to analysts, the explosion is regarded as the biggest in Lebanon's history, and the Lebanese people have not experienced the likes of it before, not even in the middle of the Lebanese civil war and during the operations of heavy Israeli air bombings that have targeted Beirut.

From another perspective, nine hospitals were destroyed, three of them completely and six of them partially, and a governmental hospital provided services to approximately one million people. The nearby hospitals were not capable of receiving the dozens of wounded

who were transferred to them due to the massive damages that had been caused to these hospitals, and some of them were forced to treat the injured in the street because of the severe damages that had befallen the medical facilities. In addition to that, damages were caused to 23 community health centres and 120 schools, as well as to 15.000 businesses, leaving thousands of people without work, and large damages were also caused to the transmission and distribution networks at the Électricité du Liban headquarters and to the water networks.

The civil society has responded immediately to this catastrophe, and that manifested itself in hundreds of individual and collective initiatives and in the thousands of volunteers of different nationalities from all regions of Lebanon, who headed straight away to the stricken areas to offer their help and salvage the wreckage and to provide food and drink in light of the negligence of the state institutions.

Problems and difficulties

Lebanon has witnessed a major collapse in fundamental services propelled by the depletion of foreign exchange reserves and the rising cost of foreign currency import subsidies on food, fuel, and medicine. Poverty has increased, with the proportion of the Lebanese population who live below the international poverty line of US\$5,50 having risen by 13 percentage points by the end of 2020, and it is expected to rise by up to 28 percentage points by the end of 2021.

The proportion of families that are facing challenges in obtaining food, health care and other fundamental services is on the rise. The effects of inflation are extremely regressive factors that disproportionately affect the poor and the middle class.

Although Lebanon is regarded as one of the countries that have tested numerous disaster scenarios continuously over the course of many years, the country still lacks general plans and policies for managing catastrophes, and according to the social workers, the weak spots revolved around the following:

- The absence of a national strategy for disaster management, and a lack in taking the necessary measurements to be able to face catastrophes.
- The complete lack of coordination and cooperation between civil organizations and state institutions.
- The difficulty of quick emergency intervention and of responding to all appeals when facing shortage of supporting resources.
- The absence of a field manual of observation for social and health institutions, and the failure to provide organizations with maps to guide them in the process of observation and intervention.
- The repetition of activities of questionnaires and observation via frequent forms which exhausted people and made them lose confidence in the helping authorities.
- The inability to maintain professional discretion due to the high influx of affected people, and insufficient closed places to receive them.
- The failure to respect the rules of social distancing imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, and overcrowding in places providing in-kind services, and the exposing of workers and beneficiaries to risks of infection.

- The inability to provide support and non-verbal communication encouraging the presence of protective masks measures.

Social work during this period

The social and humanitarian institutions present in the surroundings of Beirut were mobilized to respond to this catastrophe, and most of them formed coalitions to coordinate and unify their efforts, and groups on social media, especially on WhatsApp, contributed to spreading the needs and responding to them.

The intervention of these organizations came in three stages:

The **first stage** (from the first day until the fifth), where most of the organizations proceeded to quick and urgent intervention at the following humanitarian levels: Responding to emergency health cases, ensuring food security, ensuring alternative shelter, providing urgent psychosocial support, contacting all the beneficiaries and checking up on them, guiding them to the available sources and services, and providing them with necessary information. They also monitored the initial emergency needs and worked to meet them.

The **second stage** (from the fifth day until the second week), which began after people had realized the horror of the disaster. The organizations began the process of coordination to pour efforts into the work more effectively. Committees then appeared, and intensive field visits were held to assess needs and to observe the most fragile of those affected. The specialized social workers described this phase as shocking, since seeing the painful reality first-hand does not in any way resemble the work being performed through the centres of the organizations. Their presence in the neighbourhoods was of the utmost importance, as they were able to evaluate several aspects of life and offer support to the victims. Usually, these field trips were held by a multidisciplinary team, in addition to young volunteers, and everyone, in accordance with their specialty, would observe and assess the damages and make a list of priorities.

The **third stage**, which stretched from the second week until the second month and beyond. New needs appeared after the return of those who had been forced to evacuate their houses. Disabilities and cases of PTSD became apparent, as well as unemployment, malnutrition, and cases of non-treated diseases, all of which demanded strengthening the adaptive performance of the survivors and keeping an eye on the post-shock phase.

The resulting impact on the specialized social workers:

The specialized social workers who intervened during this period evaluated the response of the state and the governmental institutions as being ineffective and described it as being slow, with their response being dominated by a lack of coordination and the inability to supervise so as to organize the role of civil society and to regulate voluntary initiatives and groups.

"I am from the generation of social worker who are used to intervene in emergency cases, but what seems strange to me is that even today we have not learned from the lessons of the past, especially our state which has not worked on activating the disaster management authority, so that it becomes our main reference and we all work under its

banner. We are not the state, but unfortunately we play the unsupervised role of it.”, said one of the social workers interviewed.

The social workers describe their intervention in the first stage as spontaneous and unforeseen:

“There is no time to think or analyse. Some of us would stay at the centre and work to meet the basic needs that were being heaped upon us from everywhere, and others would head to the neighbourhoods to visit people in their homes and often to pull them out of their shock and help them pick up the debris and understand what had happened.” The social workers consider that the horror of the disaster required them to have several skills, and often they would take the leadership role upon themselves within multi-disciplinary teams.

” Our speedy intervention required a lot of skills from us such as quick thinking, planning and organization, the ability to manage and direct groups, good knowledge of the environment and the available resources, the wisdom to make the right decisions, and the ability to keep control over charged emotions so as to embrace the feelings of the afflicted.”

Most of the specialized social workers who intervened during this disaster were among the ones who directly or indirectly suffered from the explosion, and it was not easy for them to comprehend their shock and adapt themselves to it before heading to the afflicted people and the relatives of the victims. This reality created for them what is known as “compassion fatigue”.

It was difficult for them to separate between feeling with the other and feeling like the other. All of them spoke about negative feelings such as powerlessness, severe pain, frustration, despair, anger, anxiety, and severe stress, which was also reflected in their psychological health, as psychological symptoms such as insomnia, sporadic pains, and difficulty in concentration appeared.

Likewise, most of them talked about “Professional exhaustion” Ou l'épuisement professionnel, as they did not have fixed working hours because they were in a state of emergency, and this required them to work continuously and perform multiple tasks at an accelerating pace. Most often they would lack the time to evaluate the quality of their intervention and would be forced to meet late at night to coordinate and correct the accomplished work.

All the social workers viewed that there is an absolute necessity of them being accompanied by a team specialized in disaster management who can offer them individual and group support and advice.

” We often felt despair and frustration, and we felt it important to empty ourselves, because what we were seeing and hearing of daily tragedy is beyond human capacity to comprehend.”

Some of them talked about the feeling of inner peace despite everything.

Conclusions and suggestions

Based on all the above, we are of the view that social work in the face of cases of disasters and crises require a lot of efforts, persistence, and active presence of the social workers. Despite the multiplicity of causes for disasters and crises and their differences in form, size, impact, and consequences, their effects on individuals, families, and communities remain similar: Violence, death, destruction, displacement, loss of loved ones and friends, loss of possessions, disabilities, mental crises, and tragedies that may not heal for years.

Social work between 1975 to 1990 and after the August 4th explosion, and the help that it offered to everyone who were exposed to the catastrophes and emergencies and went through the crises that they caused, may be similar in terms of the compassion shown for the afflicted and the helping of them, providing them with the appropriate services by all means available and at the required speed, supporting them in obtaining their remaining rights, and striving to ease their tragedies.

What changed, however, are the means to which social work resorted and the possibilities that were available to it. During the period extending from 1975 to 1990 with all the events that came in between, relief work was based in a fundamental way on family support and on the local civilian organizations and bodies. Governmental institutions were also present, albeit with limited possibilities. Whereas we notice that after the August 4th explosion, the role of these associations and organizations had become secondary, despite all the many effective initiatives from the civil society bodies and the community-based groupings, the spontaneous initiatives, the unlimited willingness to accommodate families, friends, and neighbours, and the clear solidarity from people despite the catastrophe reaching them as well.

We notice the almost complete absence of the governmental institutions as well and the clear resignation of the public authorities, and the presence of the Lebanese army in the field of the relief work may be the only presence of the state that has remained marginalised.

On the other hand, we also noticeably see the phenomenon of the heavy presence of United Nations agencies, international organizations, and foreign NGOs, as these organizations took the lead in much of the relief work and in the work of rebuilding what had been destroyed, and the Lebanese government was neutralized for numerous and manifold reasons which we will not address in this study. The local actors and the civilian Lebanese organizations, which are considered closest to the Lebanese reality, remained secondary.

Perhaps what is mentioned in the article by Mona Fawaz and Mona Harb (2020), that Lebanon “cannot become a republic of NGOs”, is the best proof of that. And perhaps what is stated in the article about the importance of “gathering all strengths that aim to save any portion, however small, of the public sphere ... to start rebuilding the state, to which there is no alternative” should resonate with us.

If material assistance, whatever the form and value of it, is not combined with the pursuit of real, structural changes that allow the seeker of help to move towards being able to do without it and arrive at independence, and if it does not have a political and social dimension of supporting these people in demanding the rights that every state must ensure for all its citizens, then it is considered incomplete and even insulting to the individual, the group, society, and even to social work.

In the end, we must present some suggestions that we consider important to complete the research work that we have begun, such as: The publication of a special supplement of the field experiences of the interviewed specialized social workers from the period of the Lebanese war 1975-1990; the return to the history of social work in Lebanon, which actually began in 1948, to derive knowledge from the ancients, which the 1975-1990 war has erased; investigation into the experiences of social work from 1990 until the August 4th explosion, not just to archive them, but to anticipate and benefit from the knowledge that they bring, and to connect from it what is possible to the academic field of social work for a hopefully promising future.

The social worker, whatever names he is given and called, is every person who tries to help those whom life has let down and deemed weak and contributes to defending them.

He might feel angry and rebellious, and he might feel frustrated and tired... But his occupational commitment, like the commitment of all professions that are concerned with the human being, is what distinguishes him.

Many questions are put to him as a professional:

- How does he face the bitter reality without denying it or being neutral towards it?
- How does he let communication, understanding the other and listening to him prevail over his feelings of rejection and denial?
- How does he view the future in light of a circumstantial and stumbling reality, yet strive to build a society in which the common good, common right, respect for the law and a rightful social policy reign?
- How does he commit to political work without slipping into ideological and partisan alignments and sectarian isolation?
- How does he reject the notion of “the republic of NGOs”, yet, to contribute the return of the “state of rights and citizenship”?

Part 2

A brief review of some social workers' field experiences During the 1975-1990 war

Introduction:

This text is a continuation of Part One: “Social work in the face of crises and disasters. A case study of Lebanon in the years between 1975-1990 and after the Beirut explosion of August, 4th 2020”, in which we present a brief overview of social workers’ field initiatives which were carried out during the years of war through social institutions which played a prominent role during that period, where these entire experiences formed the material of forementioned conducted research.

We reiterate our thanks to all those who shared their experiences with us and trusted us, and we apologize in advance to those we could not reach, hoping to continue the journey and go further to narrate the biography of those who had significant experiences in the field of social work.

Assuredly, we are not quoting here the institutions’ experience in which those social workers worked, which is undoubtedly broader, more inclusive, and requires further research.

A list of field experiences that we were able to shed light on:

1. Experience through the “Centre de Protection Maternelle et Infantile” - MOSA - Karantina
2. Experience through the “Restos du Cœur Association”
3. Experiences through the “Mouvement Social”
4. Experiences through “Caritas Liban”
5. Experience through the “Lebanese Red Cross Center”- Mreijeh
6. Experience through the “Social Development Center” - SDC-MOSA - Borj El-Barajneh
7. Experience through the “Service de l’Enfant au Foyer” - SEF
8. Experience through the “Young Men Christian Association” - YMCA
9. Experience through the “Middle East Council of Churches” - MECC
10. Experience through the “Institut de Rééducation Audio-Phonétique” - IRAP
11. Experience through the “Soins Infirmiers et Développement Communautaire” - SIDC
12. Experience through the “Centre de Protection Maternelle et Infantile” of the Sisters of Charity” - Karm El Zeitoun
13. Experience through two educational cadres, each individually, at the “Ecole Libanaise de formation Sociale-Université Saint-Joseph” - ELFS-USJ
14. Experience through the “Ecole Libanaise de Formation Sociale- Université Saint-Joseph” - ELFS-USJ
15. Experience through the “NGOs Platform of Saida”
16. Experience through the “Rabieh Garden Club”
17. Experience through the “Service Social pour le Bien-être de l’Enfant au Liban” - SESOBEL
18. Experience through multiple centers for displaced people in Ouzai and the southern suburb of Beirut
19. Experiences through “Terre des Hommes-Lausanne”
20. Experience through the “Hôpital Psychiatrique de la Croix” – Bqennaya
21. Experience through “Dar al-Amal Association”
22. Experience through the “Union pour la Protection de l’Enfant au Liban” - UPEL

23. Experience through the “Centre Social pour Handicapés Physiques de Guerre” -
MOSA - Sin el-Fil
24. Experience through socio-pastoral work in the northern Bekaa region.

1. Experience through the “Centre de Protection Maternelle et Infantile” - karantina

In 1978, the Karantina neighborhood, where families, known as “Arab Al-Maslakh”, Kurdish families, and other poor and marginalized groups were living, was displaced. It was well known that there has been a “Centre de Protection Maternelle et Infantile” at Karantina since 1948, where a group of social workers, Mrs. Mona Khachan & Mrs. Danielle Cremona, dedicated their lives to extend a helping hand to those in need in that region. That center was considered a pilgrimage place for many social workers and nursing trainees in those days.

It was well known that those social workers facilitated those families moving to the areas to which they were displaced. The “Mouvement Social” welcomed the largest number of families in Ouzai, in equipped shelters especially allocated for them. The most prominent example was the frequent visits of these two social workers to the Ouzai shelters, to complete some of the tasks that they had started with those families, despite the security risks, blocked roads, and the difficulty of reaching areas that were divided by war and threats during that time.

This experience has shown us that professional commitment was greater than regional and sectarian affiliations, and above fears and risks.

2. Experience through the “Restos du Cœur Association”

The idea of “Restos du Coeur” was born at one social worker’s home, Mrs. Antoinette Kazan, at the beginning of the 1975 war, when many children who lost their families during the war were welcomed at the dinner table(X).

After the death of this social worker’s mother, and upon her request, her father began to daily welcome men who had lost their wives, at breakfast and then at the lunch table. Consequently, he proposed the idea of creating a restaurant for his daughter, and so they did. In 1983, the chain of “Restos du Coeur” was launched under the pressing need and the conditions of war and displacement. At the forefront of these restaurants was, and still is, the “Ahlan Wa Sahlan” restaurant in Sin El Fil, for which Mrs. Kazan took responsibility with the help of several Sin El Fil women and many families and friends. After the displacement of Mount Lebanon people in 1988, the idea began to grow, with the distribution of hot meals to the displaced families and children in the schools of Sin El Fil and Nabaa and other nearby neighborhoods. This initiative was well received and supported by many Lebanese figures who started to support it. As a result, an association headed by President Charles Helou was formed, established, and supported Al-Mahaba restaurants, which have become 23 restaurants. The Association obtained recognition of

its establishment from the Lebanese government on July 18, 1988, under No. 87/AD and the name of: "Friends of Al-Mahaba Restaurants". The idea expanded, and Al-Mahaba restaurants still exist today, distributed all over the Lebanese regions. Its founder continues to do her best to maintain it with courage, determination, and commitment, as long as she believes that social work is above all a service, giving, and presence. Volunteers from the local communities are assuming the work at these restaurants, defying difficulties and obstacles to accomplish their tasks. As the founder of the association Mrs. Kazan said: "The social worker's job is like an ant work... Its size might be small, but its burden is big and it never gets tired nor surrenders." ... She continued: "I do not think that any social worker did not take care of a neighbor, an elderly, or a needy person during the war years, even if it was in his/her capacity..."

3. Experiences through the "Mouvement Social

The experience of the "Mouvement Social " preceded the Lebanese war, as it was founded in 1957, yet it responded to the call of relief work at the beginning of the war through the social workers and volunteers who worked there and adhered to its principles. It is worth mentioning that the experiences mentioned by the interviewed social workers took place in various Lebanese regions: the north and south of Lebanon, Beirut, Hermel, Nabatiyeh, and Bekaa. The aforementioned social workers made the instant relief work a springboard for multiple development works.

Then came the initiative of launching several well-equipped modern sewing workshops meant for widowed women in Tripoli to work with women and train them, not only on sewing techniques but also on financial management and productivity to bring them to a stage of independence, with Mrs. Katia Kartenian.

The project of working with "delinquent juveniles", deprived of pursuing their studies during the war years, played a significant and prominent role in various centers of the "Mouvement Social" through rehabilitation, providing vocational training, and creating job opportunities, aiming to keep them away from the risks of juvenile delinquency and to create for them the spirit of citizenship, with Mrs. Roula Haidar.

Moreover, highlighting the importance of developing handicrafts and training people involved in their production and marketing led to the establishment of the "Lebanese Artisan" in 1979, with Mrs. Amal Moukarzel.

Social workers have also played a leading role in many other programs in the field of health, medicines, rural and community development, vocational training, working with juveniles in prisons and school re-enrollment programs, as well as, between 1984 and 1989, the "Training Centre for Social and Educational Work in Mechref" that was established and supervised by a social worker, Mrs. Leila Jaber.

According to many of those we interviewed, we cannot ignore the essential positive roles and impacts of the "Mouvement Social" on social work and health.

Perhaps the most significant concern of its founder, Father Grégoire Haddad, was networking and coordination.

It is worth remembering here the letter sent by Father Grégoire Haddad (1988) to social workers during the 1975 war, warning of the danger of slipping, through relief work, into the labyrinths of dependence and submission and making Lebanon a country of associations and charitable organizations. If we read it today, we would see how it conforms with the current conditions.

4. Experiences through “Caritas Liban”

Caritas Liban, whose first branch was established in the south in 1974, had a significant role in relief work across Lebanon. The large number of social workers who worked at Caritas, in collaboration with volunteers and other workers, played a crucial role in launching multiple and various projects, through “districts” that had been working as a beehive since the early stages of displacement, as well as in the ensuing stages, in terms of relief work, material, school, medical and hospital aids, mobile clinics, and socio-economic development.

We shall focus below on some of these initiatives:

The plight of the South was the starting point for Caritas Liban. The spark of the Lebanese war began in Saida in 1975, and its people knew repeated rounds of violence and displacement since that date. Among those who had notable and courageous roles during the war years was Sister Aida Yazbeck, the director of the Caritas Liban Sud at the time, when the biggest challenge was to support the remaining families in their areas of residence to withstand despite the repeated rounds of violence between 1983 and 1990 (events of Al-Shahar and Chouf and then the region of Iqleem Al-Kharoub and Al-Jabal, and then east of Saida and Maghdoucheh), in addition to the repeated Israeli invasions and the tragedies, destructions and deaths left behind. She also contributed to providing shelters to many families who were displaced from Beirut towards the south during the War of Elimination in 1989-1990.

Sister Yazbeck cooperated with a large and diversified work team, as well as with various governmental, civil, and religious institutions and organizations of all sects and affiliations, and worked wisely, courageously, and deliberately, in a sensitive political situation, tragic conditions, and dangerous and challenging security conditions. She also assisted in launching the “Youth Volunteers” program, whose contribution constituted an active component in the relief work. Caritas adopted this work style, and it later became the core of social work.

Another experience during the war was the contribution of a social worker, Sister Aline Afif, who launched the first “elderly club” in Furn el Chebbak which included, in addition to the daily restaurant, medical examinations, distribution of medicines, health care services, and humanitarian tasks that matched the needs of that time (cutting hair, nail trimming, and weekly bathing...) in addition to leisure activities that were essential for the elderly who were displaced from their villages. This project has been distinguished by

an active contribution from all the region's stakeholders, including municipalities, civil and nongovernmental organizations, and local community volunteers. We all know the impact of displacement on the elderly at this stage as they are feeling the loss of a past that will not return.

From what Sister Afif said: *"Relief work was necessary at one point; if it hadn't existed these people would have died of hunger. Yet, it could not be a basis for social work... Relief work teaches people to become dependent..."*.

Another initiative addressed by Sister Afif is the issue of marginalized drug users, HIV people, and prisoners, as well as her contribution to launching many programs in collaboration with various institutions such as Oum el Nour Group, the Saint-Charles Addiction Centre, "General Prison Chaplaincy" and other institutions, working on networking between them.

From what she said: *"The beneficiary of the service must become a volunteer ..."*. She added: *"Clarity in vision, prioritization, changing methods according to objectives, impulsiveness and wisdom are essential elements of social work"*. She elaborated saying: *"Religion has never been a barrier to our work at any time..."*.

Another experience must be included in which another social worker, Mrs. Blanche Massaad, who spent 40 years in Caritas and is still working with the same enthusiasm and determination, has played a prominent role in many leading projects and programs despite the difficulties and obstacles. She said: *"I used to work sometimes day and night... I endured the difficulties because I love my job ... This required plenty of stability, determination, persistence, cooperation as well as networking with multiple institutions, all in the context of the difficult conditions of war and the danger of inter-regional transport."* She continued: *"We tried to do relief work based on the respect for human dignity driven by the idea of reducing the burden and developing people's strengths in their immediate environment"*.

Another social worker's experience is that of Mrs. Madonna Adass who spent her entire career in the Bekaa and Rashaya Caritas department and had various activities helping families to face tragedies caused by war. In addition to supporting farmers and livestock owners in the aforementioned areas to produce dairy products and distribute them to nearby shops as regions were separated apart. She also had a couple of initiatives establishing local agricultural cooperatives and a pioneering attempt to support and produce aromatic plants to help people stay in their region. Unfortunately, these initiatives have not received sufficient support to be developed.

Another example is that of Ms. Jeanne Ghostine who spent eight months in Cyprus in 1976 at the request of Caritas officials to follow up on the situation of families who had fled to Cyprus by sea in tragic circumstances at the beginning of the war as a result of violence and shelling, and where they were living in difficult situations in a country they did not know.

The task of this social worker was challenging; however, she answered the call, leaving her own family in difficult conditions and going after the displaced families in response to her professional duty and dedication to her principles.

Many others generously supported aid efforts during the war period but we could not reach them.

5. Experience through the “Lebanese Red Cross Center-Mreijeh”

Between 1984 and 1988, there was a pioneering experience at the Lebanese Red Cross Center-Mreijeh by the social worker in charge who gathered around forty field volunteers from the local community, who left their parties and volunteered in the humanitarian relief sector, which soon developed into development work to enable individuals and families to cope with the difficult situations left behind by war:

- From distributing bread to families to securing flour, establishing a cooperative, providing the supplies of the Saj bread industry in homes, facilitating their sale at the supermarkets, and ensuring an additional income to the families.
- From purchasing crutches and distributing them to people with special needs, establishing a cooperative to produce crutches and sell those left: hence the income goes back to those involved.
- From helping children with special needs stay at home to their integration into district schools and urging their families to participate in extracurricular activities and other health care or preventive activities.

It is worth mentioning that this center was one of the first to launch awareness campaigns to prevent breast cancer and heart diseases.

What was prominent in all those activities was the activation of the municipality's role and urging it to contribute to these projects.

6. Experience through the “Social Development Center”–SDC Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) - Borj El-Barajneh

During the 1975-1990 war, primary healthcare centers played a significant role in providing health care, social assistance, and relief services (Mrs. Neemat Kenaan, 1977), despite the diversity of their names (healthcare centers, social and healthcare centers, comprehensive development centers, or development centers, etc.).

As an example, the “Social Development Center” in Borj El-Barajneh”, founded in 1971, played a prominent and exemplary role during the war in terms of diversity and the number of programs, and its direct interaction with its immediate environment, in addition to the activation of all the existing human and institutional resources. The social

worker at the head of the center, Mrs. Nadia Tawtel, played a pioneering and leading role. This center was considered for many years a model for many social workers, as well as trainees from various universities and institutes, in terms of engaging with its neighborhood, interacting with its residents, developing all its resources, and activating them.

Many social workers worked in this center with the same enthusiasm and devotion. The social worker's name who founded and directed it remained connected to it for many years. She held a special place in the Borj El-Barajneh, which has never been disturbed by sectarian or regional affiliation.

7. Experiences through the “Service de l’Enfant au Foyer” SEF

One of the most important programs during the war was helping widowed mothers and their children within the family. In 1977, the French institution SALVE (Service d’aide au Liban pour veuves et enfants) sent an envoy to Lebanon to consider helping Lebanese orphans and their mothers in war conditions.

In 1978, the “Service de l’Enfant au Foyer” (SEF), an association serving the child and the mother within the family, was established with the contribution of social workers, Mrs. Marcelle Daou and Mrs. Claudette Nehme, who accompanied this project at its various stages, the starting point being the Maronite Diocese of Antelias. The SALVE project’s manager, Mrs. Thérèse Tawilé said: *“The war has left a different reality that we didn’t expect. However, it created new initiatives that pushed us to adapt to the new circumstances.”*

In 1980, SALVE signed an agreement with this association, and at the same period; an agreement was signed with Caritas Liban to carry out a similar project that lasted until 2005 with Mrs. Zeina Madi. In 1981, SALVE and the Hariri Foundation agreed to establish a center in Saida and then in Chiah with the “Human Health Authority”. SALVE was then contacted by the “Directorate General of Social Affairs”, whose contribution at that time was limited to orphaned children's care in institutions, to shape this project. In the context of cooperation between the Directorate General of Social Affairs and “The United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund”- UNICEF, aiming to develop child care in Lebanon, it has been agreed to give priority to child care within his family rather than social institutions, as is customary in orphan cases and bad socio-economic conditions. The Directorate General of Social Affairs, which was known as the Social Welfare Department at that time, asked the “Ecole Libanaise de Formation Sociale” (ELFS-USJ) and “the Institute of Women’s Studies” at Beirut University College (BUC)” to rehabilitate human resources working in this field, particularly social workers at the Directorate General of Social Affairs and in Social Development Centers as well as in concerned civil bodies to serve better according to this methodology.

In 1985, it was decided to benefit from the “Grelac Fund”, which was named after an Austrian woman who donated to the Lebanese war orphans, and it was agreed to use this

donation in a pilot project involving the child in his family. At that time, this project was planned to serve nearly 800 families, some of them through the social centers under the Directorate General of Social Affairs and others through non-governmental institutions. The project practically started working in 1986, under the name "Helping widowed mothers within the Family".

Shifting from relief to development work was a pioneering experience. Through this project, many children were accompanied until they became adults and enrolled in universities thanks to the devotion and commitment of all the social workers there.

Regulatory, administrative, and technical frameworks were taken into consideration in designing this plan to maintain flexibility, freedom of practice, and decision-making by social workers, which had a positive impact on work development, as most social workers said.

This pilot program covered many levels, extending from financial aid, and essential family services such as health and education, to the vocational rehabilitation programs for mothers, supporting them in family management, planning for the future, empowering them to achieve their independence, re-engaging families in society and regaining their status among family, relatives, and friends. The average number of years to empower a family to self-reliance is not less than 5 to 6 years.

In 2015, the SEF adapted to the Lebanese reality, where the issue of orphans was no longer presented as it was before; the focus shifted to addressing the domestic violence issue, thus turning into a center for helping and sheltering abused women and their children. Mrs. Zeina Madi and Mrs. Marcelle Daou are still following the same professional rules and bases until today.

It is important to shed light on the important role those social workers played in shaping this project's ideal vision since its beginning, following up and developing it to this day.

8. Experience through the "Young Men Christian Association" YMCA

At the beginning of the war, the Young Men Christian Association in Lebanon YMCA, which was established in 1890, turned to relief work, and it had an active contribution in this field. Perhaps, the most valuable achievement of that period was the "Chronic Diseases Drugs Project", which was launched in 1988 and covered all the Lebanese regions through some 450 dispensaries and health care centers in cooperation with the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health and with the support of the World Health Organization. It was testified that this project has contributed to alleviating many health problems.

Mrs. Jenny Nawfal, has participated in the activities of this association for many years as part of relief work with displaced people and those affected by car bomb explosions, as well as in rural development programs and vocational training projects in remote villages, and also in the summer camps project, which brought together a large number of

volunteers, and had a significant impact on the mobility, interaction, and involvement of local communities in development work. Many interns in the social work field were among these volunteers who played a prominent role in this domain.

9. Experience through the “Middle East Council of Churches” MECC

There was a pioneering experience between 1980 and 1983 in Akkar district in the field of relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction work between the Middle East Council of Churches and ELFS-USJ, with the support of the Canadian Embassy. Health care, prevention, and education had a large share in these activities through campaigns to establish and support social and health care institutions and educational centers. Such a pilot program was carried out in the village of “Qenia Akroum” in the Akkar district, in which the director of the ELFS, Mrs. Marie Naltchayan, at that time contributed with great efficiency and determination. Furthermore, she provided financial and moral support to the project despite the war circumstances and moving difficulties and dangers. Mrs. Foutine Audi, a social worker of the Council of Churches played an active role in this program, as her determination to overcome the challenges was the key element in the work's success. In addition to the educational sessions, this program included development projects in the field of agriculture, particularly olive growing. Later on, the activities were expanded to other regions.

Subsequently, work continued in the Akkar district through various social projects, in which the “Mouvement Social” participated, along with the Middle East Council of Churches; the promotion of both youth and women roles had the largest focus in these projects. The Ministry of Administrative Development, the Ministry of Social Affairs, and municipalities also played a supportive role in rural, agricultural, and handicraft development projects in that region.

Mrs. Audi said: *“I remember all the stages of the work; it was a collective work in which everyone participated, whether he/she was a beneficiary, an assistant or a donor, where the beneficiary was feeling, in the end, that the project was his because he named it, he participated in setting its goals and in its implementation, and because it responded to his urgent needs.”*

10. Experience through the “Institut de Rééducation Audio-Phonétique” IRAP

Another pioneering initiative was the experience of the “Institut de Rééducation Audio-Phonétique” “IRAP” founded in 1960. The administrator decided to engage in relief work at the beginning of the Lebanese war. As a result, this experience was launched in Biaoqout, a village that was geographically close to the institute, from which its Shiite inhabitants were forced to leave, and other displaced people from Damour, Chouf, and northern Lebanon in 1989 came to live in it.

Relief work began with two workers, Mrs. Nada Zeidan & Mrs. Josiane Chemaly, at “the Lady’s House”, which was a temporary home where all social and service work was organized. Later on, it turned into a children’s nursery and a youth club. Relief work has rapidly shifted into development work, and the efforts were concentrated on three key elements: education, health, and work.

At that time, social workers had to address various challenges, perhaps the most difficult one was dealing with the conflicts between displaced people coming to “Biaqout”, the remaining families who were living in the neighborhood, and those who returned to it.

In response to these needs, the “Social Health Care Center” was opened in 1990, and its most important activities were providing health care, medical, and educational services, in addition to various social services. When health care services were no longer needed, the center was turned into a “Social Center”, which provided evening classes and a youth club besides the social services.

Later on, the “Ayadina” atelier project was launched to help women relying on themselves through sewing and handicrafts. Subsequently, the challenge for social workers began to confront the mentality of a woman who hadn’t previously worked outside her home and was accustomed to dependency and facing the mindset of a husband who does not favor the idea of women’s work. Jointly, on the one hand, confronting the “beggar” mentality and shifting it to a “producer” mentality, and on the other hand, betting on the coexistence of people who are culturally, doctrinally, and ideologically apart working together within a joint project, and accompanying them to let them become partners in work, production, and coexistence.

The credit in facing these challenges goes to the commitment, persistence, patience, and willpower of social workers, as Mrs. Zeidan said: *“The problems were the same, and hopes were the same for all.” ... “The chairs on which the ladies were sitting were getting closer and closer” ...Hence, fears fled away and barriers diminished.”*

11. Experience through the “Soins Infirmiers et Développement Communautaire” - SIDC

The SIDC, which was founded in 1987 by Elie Aaraj, played a significant role in Sin El Fil - Nabaa region during the Lebanese war in terms of organizing life in shelters and in the region as a whole, providing and organizing relief services, in addition to networking operations among NGOs, institutes and local communities which already existed. Several social workers living there made an active contribution and cooperated closely with this aforementioned NGO.

Additionally, the social workers (Perla Khalil, Nohra Moundalak, and others) at SIDC contributed to launching the School Health Club project in public schools located in the Sin El Fil –Nabaa region, which included health education topics. Later on, a group of

young people emerged from this club, adhered to SIDC, and engaged in its activities. They followed intensive training and later worked as volunteers there.

Several programs have been sequentially launched in the SIDC, affecting marginalized groups of drug users, LGBT, and people living with HIV. Mrs. Nadia Badran has played a prominent role in direct assistance to those people and their families, defending them and resorting to their rights. Subsequently, methodologies, methods of action, prevention, and awareness were varied, for instance: “street intervention”, “peer training”, and “mobile units”.

12. Experience through the “Centre de Protection Maternelle et Infantile” of the Sisters of Charity - Karm El Zeitoun

During 13 years of the 1975 war, Mrs. Amal Harb’s initiative in Karm El Zeitoun was a milestone that affected many aspects of life, besides relief work and sheltering displaced people from various Lebanese regions as a result of shelling nearby residential neighborhoods, and the deteriorating security conditions in more than one region. There came healthcare, educational, and social programs, direct work with families, awareness programs with women and girls, mentoring and counseling programs with young men and women, recreational, cultural, and environmental programs with children, and development programs.

One of the most important achievements was purchasing and equipping a building in Karm El-Zeitoun to become a legitimate social center called the “Centre de Protection Maternelle et Infantile” of the Sisters of Charity in Lebanon, where this social worker played at that time a fundamental role in buying and equipping this building.

This experience was accompanied by plenty of diligence, patience, and overcoming difficulties. As Mrs. Harb said: “Mother Marie-Claire Saad and her insight were my support in many stages of work... I never stopped looking forward to getting out of temporary relief work and launching development projects with the participation of the neighborhood residents.”

13. Experience of two educational cadres, each individually through the “Ecole Libanaise de Formation Sociale-Université Saint-Joseph” - ELFS-USJ

A new cycle of violence occurred inside residential neighborhoods in Beirut between 1989 and 1990. Several initiatives came to help the residents of these neighborhoods to cope with the situation, one example is the pioneering experience that was spontaneously and independently launched by Sister Noha Daccache who was a professor at the ELFS-USJ in the quarters of “Ain El Remmaneh, Furn El Chebbak, Badaro, and Tahwita”. Like in other initiatives, the prevailing situation required plenty of courage, readiness, planning, coordination, and quick action. This initiative lasted for eight months, with the participation of 200 volunteers. They had to work under challenging conditions, like bombing residential areas, sniping, sectarian and ideological fanaticism, lack of resources, and difficulty in accessing aid.

Notably, those responsible for this experience were able to draw the fundamental principles and bases to build on and adhere to. At the end of each working day, there was an assessment of what had been implemented and a formulation of what was to be implemented.

We recall also an experience that was carried out by Mrs. May Hazzaz, who was also a professor at ELFS-USJ, where she started from her home with a team of young volunteers to assist in the Hadath area, which was considered one of the most exposed areas to shelling and violence.

It is well known that during the 15-year Lebanese war, security conditions often forced many people to remain in their places of residence for long periods, which prompted some of them to engage in relief work in the areas they were able to reach.

The region mentioned above was divided into six areas, and tasks were distributed, taking into consideration the security conditions and ease of mobility. Each group carried out various activities that had a “panacea” impact in that period, such as the distribution of water, bread, medicines, milk for babies, taking care of the elderly, and waste management. That team counted the number of residents and listed them by name, mentioning their blood groups, to facilitate emergency operations. Mrs. Hazzaz had a leading role in terms of organizing work, distributing tasks and directing them, urging everyone to respect privacy and accept others, and addressing partisan conflicts that were taking place. Furthermore, she played a role in organizing training sessions according to needs.

From what she said: *“I hope that the situation will change and that there will be a radical change in policies, programs, and mentalities so that we don’t go back to such days...”*.

14. Experience through the “Ecole Libanaise de Formation Sociale-Université Saint-Joseph” - ELFS-USJ

A new practice can be identified in some periods of the 1975 Lebanese war, which was the “car bombs” that exploded in residential neighborhoods, which, in addition to killing in its most horrible manifestation, displaced hundreds of families, left behind a mass of destruction and desolation, and many wounded people. Furthermore, survivors were left with various permanent disabilities. This hellish method created among the affected groups as well as all citizens a state of terror, anxiety, and frustration that was tough to overcome, financially and morally, without support or assistance.

The ELFS, along with several social workers, volunteers, and non-governmental organizations, launched a project called the “ rapid social intervention”, the stage that follows the intervention of the civil defense and the Red Cross teams to contribute to alleviating the impact of the tragedy and to help the residents of the harmed quarters to look for a relative, check on a family member, search for a temporary residence place or secure the basic needs that were lost, as well as offering other social relief aid and psychological support. This experience contributed to filling the void at the time, albeit temporarily.

Those teams were geographically distributed according to the social workers’ residence areas to enable them to easily reach the scene in case the roads had been blocked. Cooperation was close at that time with the YMCA, which supported this intervention between 1986 and 1987, which covered six residential quarters in Beirut that were affected by car bomb explosions.

That initiative resulted in introducing new data to the training material and preparations, particularly in “emergency social work intervention”.

Between 1978 -1981 and 1987-1989, the ELFS-USJ helped a lot of families that had been displaced from several areas due to frequent cycles of violence. They were sheltered at schools, churches, mosques, buildings under construction, or in residential complexes that were rehabilitated so that they could take in families in a decent way respecting the simplest means of living.

A constant effort was made with those families to help them adapt to a new social and geographical reality, to assist them in running their lives, and gradually and steadily prepare them to be reinstated in their former places of residence, in case the security situation allowed it, or assist them in adapting to the areas they chose to live in, or follow up with them while waiting for better conditions to return home, according to later return programs.

It was a very rich experience in which many Social Work educators and students participated with the support of many local and foreign organizations.

The ELFS organized many training sessions between 1977 and 1990. Perhaps, the most prominent one was a 200-hour training course on “Social Intervention in Disasters” in 1988. It was conducted by experts from the “French Red Cross” who came from France especially to share their experience. The course was held at the “Franciscan School in Badaro”, a place called, at that time, the “front lines” that divided Beirut into two regions: Eastern Beirut and Western Beirut. A large number of social workers came from several areas of Beirut, which was divided by earth mounds and sniping operations. That was a sign of a bold and honest challenge from social workers in the face of those barriers.

It was noteworthy that all colleges and institutes of Social Work challenged the security situation, prioritizing intensive training for their students. The majority of institutes had not stopped working during that time, and the enthusiasm of students and professors was a reason to continue and a hope of defying war which was refused by many Lebanese people.

It was remarkable that even in the days when gasoline was scarce and mobility was difficult, the official in charge of ELFS at that time took the responsibility of securing “gasoline” for the professors to allow them to teach their students at a house-provided by one of the social workers to accommodate students and facilitate their education. This initiative has been repeated more than once. It was a clear example of the desire to challenge difficulties and face reality.

During the war, the “Institute of Women’s Studies” at Beirut University College played a key role in organizing many intensive training courses on the topics of “specialized education”, “working with groups”, “conflict management”, and “development work”, in various regions of Lebanon. It is important to recall later on other experiences conducted by this Institute in this field.

It is also important to return to similar experiences carried out by other universities and institutes, such as the Lebanese University, the Faculty of Public Health, Haikazian University, and others during the war years.

15. Experience through the “NGOs Platform of Saida”

Many initiatives were done in the south of Lebanon, as all associations and social centers have been involved in relief work. Perhaps, the experience of the “NGOs Platform of Saida” deserves to be considered, in 1980, after the Israeli invasion, and through the dispensaries coordination body, some associations working in different fields such as health, social, and education assembled, aiming at integrating, organizing and facilitating relief work.

As one of the social workers said: *“The impulsivity is fundamental; however, it is not adequate if it does not coincide with a clear vision and prior planning of each action...”*

This platform began with five associations and now it comprises 60 associations. It managed to overcome party, sectarian, and ideological affiliations. Furthermore, during that period, it was able to abide by the rules of democracy in terms of periodic elections, rotation of management, and frequent meetings of the General Assembly. It had an office in the municipality and an active presence since the early 1990s. It is worth noting that many social workers played an active and pioneering role in this platform through the associations and institutions in which they were working and which were part of that platform.

This platform has contributed to relief work in August 2020 in Beirut since the early hours of the explosion.

Notably, during the war, many platforms and coordination bodies were formed in Bourj Hammoud/ Sin el-Fil/ Nabaa, Tripoli, the Bekaa, and other Lebanese regions that we did not have the opportunity to dig deep into their activities, hoping to approach them in the future.

16. Experience through the “Rabieh Garden Club”

Another experience that deserves to be considered follows the displacement of the Damour people and their arrival by sea in small boats to Kaslik beaches. Many associations and individuals rushed to shelter and assist them, including the head of Rabieh municipality, Mrs. Nabila Fares, who specialized in Social Affairs and had an active role in sheltering nearly 400 people in Rabieh Marine Resort, in Rabieh town in the Metn district. From what Mrs. Fares said when the families were received: *“They have become our guests, and from now on they are our responsibility and we have to take care of them...”*. She continued: *“I’ve already set a plan in my mind, which was not difficult as it is in the core of my specialty of Social Work; however, the main point is the implementation.”*

The workshop began, and a team of Rabieh residents who were ready to help was recruited. The Rabieh club was opened to receive the in-kind assistance supplies that were daily sent to Rabieh Marine Resort, where families were accommodated in particular rooms, and a list of residents’ names was posted in each room. Mrs. Fares said: *“We organized life within the complex: a cooking team, a cleaning team, and a team in charge of recreational and educational activities for children, and those roles were rotated weekly. The rules were applied to everyone thoughtfully, as respect for human dignity was one of our foremost principles at work”*.

It is worth mentioning here that, in 1979, Mrs. Nabila Fares founded ACSAUVEL Association- *“Civil Association for Safety of the Children in Lebanon”*, which was the offspring of the above-mentioned experience, as something specific had to be created for children because they are the paramount victims in the absurd adult war. She is still managing it with honesty and sincerity.

17. Experience through the “Service Social pour le Bien-être de l’Enfant au Liban” SESOBEL

The issue of disability was one of the most prominent problems created by war, and one of its negative consequences was the suspension of work at many social welfare institutions for people with special needs or people with solid wills. Subsequently, an appeal was launched by Mrs. Yvonne Chami. Other social workers responded to it as well as Mrs. Solange Sakr with a multidisciplinary work team. Hence, in 1977 the SESOBEL association was founded.

Soon enough, Mrs. Fadia Safi joined the working team, and the project was launched amid the Lebanese war. Mrs. Safi said *“Because of war, we were forced to suspend some projects to concentrate on relief work for the displaced people. War taught us to depend on ourselves to support and finance our projects and programs. We were not satisfied with reality and did not adapt to it, but we tried to cope with the situation”*. She continued: *“No matter how tough the circumstances, the working team kept its enthusiasm and the spirit of initiative and volunteering alongside the high level of professionalism that was accompanying us”*.

SESOBEL introduced new and developed concepts to this field, especially working with the direct and indirect environment, focusing on diagnosis and follow-up, seeking inclusion within society, working with families, supporting and training them to follow up on their children even after they pass beyond adolescence, as well as working on the society to accept the different otherness, creating social awareness about disability and contributing to research work. The greatest concern was the development of laws and social policies that guarantee the implementation of this group's rights, as they are citizens like everyone else.

Perhaps the main achievement was the contribution of SESOBEL through Mrs. Solange Sakr, in the Constituent Committee for the Disabled within the Ministry of Social Affairs and her active participation in drafting the law of 2020/200, which had an important influence on those with solid wills, even though it has not been completed yet. From what Mrs. Sakr said: *“Social work must keep up with societal and life issues... When there are groups that cannot obtain their rights, social workers must stand for them...”*. *“We cannot generalize social work to all social environments, but we can develop laws that make a difference in citizens’ lives and make them demand their rights...”*

It is worth mentioning other successful experiences carried out by several social institutions in the field of disability in various areas in Lebanon. We hope to shed light on them one day.

18. Experience through Multiple center to shelter the displaced in Ouzai, and the southern suburb of Beirut

During the war years, the prevailing security situation did not prevent social workers from fulfilling their obligations despite the risks they were exposed to.

We mention here the active presence of Mrs. Wafa Soueid Kanaan, who supported the displaced families that had been affected by war through various centers and different associations and institutions, such as the Lebanese Child Association in Haret Hreik, the Lebanese Relief Organization, the camps of displaced people in Ouzai, as well as in what was called then, the “beaches area”, and other areas that welcomed displaced people. Mrs. Kanaan contributed to several relief works; she was not frightened by the shelling, blocked roads, and other war dangers.

Mrs. Kanaan said: *“Speaking transparently, negotiation, mediation, and persuasion are the traits that the social worker must have to give people their rights. She believed in the importance of government work, as she said, “The work of NGOs is very important and effective in emergency and disaster situations; however, this is not sufficient, as it requires institutionalization and organization...”. “Individual initiatives are important, yet, they lack vision, inclusiveness and sustainability.”*

19. Experience through “Terre des Hommes-Lausanne”

Probably the social worker's experience, Mrs. Takla Wakim, at “Terre des Hommes-Lausanne” who suffered with her family from displacement more than nine times during the Lebanese war, without being discouraged from working, was the greatest evidence of professional commitment. She ensured work continuity wherever she was. As she said: *“I felt angry many times, but when there is someone in need in front of me, I only see the human being in him, regardless of his affiliations and beliefs...”*. She continued: *“The difference was a source of strength for me.”* At the end of her career, she was awarded by “Terre des Hommes-Lausanne -Switzerland, for her outstanding efforts. Moreover, she was a founding member of “NGOs Platform of Saida”.

The experience of Mrs. Georgette Azar who has also worked at “Terre des Hommes” for more than 16 years also deserves recognition when she moved between Bab Al Tabbaneh in Tripoli, Hay El Sellom, Nabaa, and Borj El Barajneh in Beirut. As she said: *“These areas are the poorest, most miserable and neglected...”*. She continued: *“Social work in those areas helped me practice my humanity... crystallized my personality and pushed me to open up to the others who are different from me...”*.

During the war years, social work was not limited to relief work, yet many associations and institutions that were dealing with special cases pursued their work despite difficulties.

20. Experience through the “Hôpital Psychiatrique de la Croix” - Bqennaya

One of the experiences that is worth mentioning is that of Mrs. Wadad Gemayel Chehab at Deir El Salib, who challenged the risks and difficulties of maintaining the quality of social intervention with people suffering from psychiatric and mental illnesses, and drug addicts in and outside the hospital. The problem of reaching unsafe or remote areas never stopped her, even sometimes late at night, when the situation called for her attendance. Mrs. Chehab said: *“I tried hard to keep the relationship between the patient at the hospital and his family, and I kept up with people when they were discharged and when they returned to normal life. I also helped them to get their rights, contributed to bringing them back to their environment, and worked for their reintegration.”* She continued: *“I wasn’t alone in this mission; we were sharing tasks with my fellow social workers at the hospital.”* She elaborated: *“As social workers, we must consistently assess our work to avoid slipping into monotony and insularity, which are the two greatest threats to the social worker.” ... “We have to be significantly loving and giving, dig deeply into social situations, and do not let appearances deceive us... we have to believe that people are capable of changing.”*

Determination, fortitude, commitment, and devotion accompanied this experience.

21. Experience through “Dar al-Amal Association”

Working with marginalized groups, such as homeless children, those prone to deviation or delinquency, girls exposed to violence and exploitation, and other marginalized groups, constituted a major challenge during the war years. Mrs. Nathalie Chemaly, accepted the challenge and pursued her task through “Dar Al-Amal Association”, particularly through “Al Safa Centers”. She moved around in her work between “Bourj Hammoud, Sin El Fil, Ruwaisat Al-Jdeideh and Dbayeh”. She accompanied the girls and young women where they were living. She said: “The social worker has a rapid ability to adapt to reality and invent new work methods; this adaptation did not affect the quality of my work; rather, it motivated me...”. She added: “The name of Al Safa centers came from a girl who died in an accident at the time, and her name was Safa.”

She elaborated: “We have to fortify the social work profession and its workers so that we do not collapse under the weight of the significant number of associations that flocked to Lebanon and often dictated different ways of working, not necessarily compatible with our reality.”

22. Experience through the “Union pour la Protection de l'Enfance au Liban” - UPEL

The “juvenile delinquents” sector did not survive the horrors of war; hence the “Warwar Observation Center” was closed, as well as the “Rehabilitation Institute in Yarze” and the “Gemmayzeh home in Beirut”, which welcomed the juveniles as soon as they left the rehabilitation institute to prepare and re-engage them in society.

Everyone at “Al-Fanar Center” retreated with a few staff members left. Mrs. Mireille Khadige, who accompanied juvenile delinquents during the 45 years of her professional life, did not despair. She had never given up her perseverance to work with and for juveniles, despite the difficulties, obstacles, lack of resources, and weak human potential in addition to the deteriorating security conditions. She said: *“The challenges were numerous; however, despite the difficulties, our small number, and our modest potential, we managed to maintain the quality of our work...”*. She continued: *“Perhaps the best reward was when one of the young men leaving the center told me: I shall come back to visit you; if I had met you during my childhood, I would not have been exposed to what I had been subject to and would not have slipped into works like the ones I did. You were my savior.”* Mrs. Khadige embodied commitment and sacrifice in a cause she believed in, and she worked for it silently, modestly, and steadily.

23. Experience through the “Centre Social pour Handicapés Physiques de Guerre” – MOSA - Sin el-Fil

Due to the large number of disabled people in the Lebanese war, including fighters and civilians who were injured by shelling, sniping, and explosions, the “Beit Chabeb Center for war disabled” was established in early 1976. One of its essential goals was the rehabilitation of people with disabilities. Many specialists worked at that center, including social workers who took upon themselves the responsibility of assisting these people's families, socially, economically, and in their lives. Due to the increasing numbers and to follow up on the disabled who left the Beit Chabeb center and to help them reintegrate into their environment, another center in Sin el-Fil emerged with direct support from the “Department of Social Welfare”. The management of this center was entrusted to a social worker, Mrs. Marie-Rose Rahme Awwad who worked at “Beit Chabeb Center for war disabled”. With a multidisciplinary team, she tried with determination, persistence, and efficiency to support the war disabled and to help them regain some of their independence, through rehabilitation, and productive and social programs; she secured the beginning of a decent life for them. All that was under difficult security conditions until the 1990 War of Elimination which destroyed the center and ended what had begun, ending the hopes and dreams of its employees as well as its beneficiaries. Mrs. Awwad said: “We had to invent everything: the work methods, the possibilities of providing

appropriate equipment and programs, and cooperation with the associations and institutions supporting our work”.

24. Experience through socio-pastoral work in the northern Bekaa region

At the end, it is necessary to pay a respectful tribute to the memory of Jesuit Father Nicolas Kluiters whose experience as a social worker continued until he passed away. He obtained his social work certificate in 1970 from the “Ecole Libanaise de Formation Sociale-Université Saint-Joseph”.

This Dutch Father came to Lebanon in 1966 (Dagher, Carole, 2013), learned Arabic, and took lessons in Arabic literature, interpretation of the Koran, Sufism, and Islam. His keen interest in the lives of the poor and his yearning for social justice led him to enter the field of social work. As he said, according to those who were close to him: *“kindheartedness is not enough; social work is a profession, gained by learning”*. In the summer of 1974, he was appointed to Taanayel and chose to practice in the areas of Hermel, Deir Al-Ahmar, and Hadath Baalbeck villages, which were mixed and the most deprived, as he used to say.

He left Lebanon in 1975 and returned to it at the beginning of 1976 fall with full awareness of the dangers that he might face. He settled in “Barqa”, a village that was known for its family and tribal divisions, and took it upon himself to practice his socio-pastoral work in neighboring villages.

After his return, Father Kluiters started to finalize the projects he initiated before leaving, trying to bring life back to the region which was exhausted by the early years of war. He discovered the tribal customs, political and family divisions, inherited grudges, and acts of revenge; hence, he launched activities that correspond to this reality. His main concern was to keep the population in their villages and seek peace between tribes and religions, so he decided to declare war on war in his way; external war and internal war, as one of his acquaintances said.

He assisted in building agricultural roads, and water canals, purchased the necessary tools for agriculture, contributed to the construction of schools and dispensaries, provided conference and meeting rooms, improved roads, and ensured better living conditions, as far as possible, in difficult security and living circumstances. Moreover, he established a sewing workshop for women that still exists today. All those initiatives and projects gradually changed the conditions of many families. He launched projects, sought funding sources, and urged the entire population to participate actively in these projects. He was particularly interested in highlighting collective success stories and always sought reconciliation among adversaries and putting an end to war between families and tribes.

He opposed the division of the country in his way and believed in interfaith communication and coexistence, and his main concern was to assist people in helping

themselves; of course, besides all this, he was performing his pastoral work in the northern Bekaa region as a Jesuit priest, as well as a social worker.

Father Kluiters was open-minded, affectionate, humble, and could observe, in addition to his methodical and meticulous nature, seriousness, moral rigor, courage, and his ability to be in harmony with all situations. He always kept saying: *"We must move forward; love is stronger than hatred..."*

He continued his humanitarian and professional commitment to the region where he chose to be, with determination and persistence. The socio-economic, medical, and educational development remained his priority. He achieved in five years what others could only achieve in double that time, until he was kidnapped on March 13, 1985. His body was found mutilated on April 1, and he was buried in "Taanayel".

As someone said: *"This stranger watered the land under the feet of the cedars of Lebanon with his blood, after helping to water it with spring water. He formulated his wish: "To be the fertilizer of the fertile and neglected land of the northern Bekaa."*

"Today on this land, all kinds of fruits grow, especially work, hope, and love flourish. In this place that he brought out of oblivion, far away, this Jesuit father's name is associated with fruit trees, the running water in the orchards, the church choir, and the laughter of the children in the school playground." (Dagher, Carole, 2013).

Social workers faced significant challenges at that stage, and social workers had to show persistence, determination, and hope. We have mentioned a few initiatives and experiences, and many of them still need to be considered and highlighted.

Conclusion

In conclusion, and through the brief picture that we quoted about initiatives undertaken by a number of social workers during the war years, we can say that they, collectively, did not stop at relief work, despite the urgent need for it at the time. Even with its necessity and importance, they rather got over it to engage in the concept of “social work” and “human relations” with people who needed it.

On this basis, social workers extracted the positive hidden abilities of individuals and groups. They did not stop at the negative reactions except for the sake of facilitating attentive listening and understanding, so they tried harder to shape, support and organize the potential capabilities in order to activate them and securing their permanence.

They tried to highlight the positive issues, that bring people together and eliminate the negative ones that create divisions; therefore, joint work has become a starting point for rebuilding the common interest, and listening to the different otherness, has become a way to reconsider hostilities and hatreds.

They tried to devise new and appropriate means of work and a reconstructive approach of humanitarian and legal character. Within this framework, they contributed, either directly or indirectly, through the human and professional relationships built with all those who helped them, to urge the estranged to build close relations among themselves and prompting them to reconsider their accumulated divisions.

They tried to engage people in facing their own problems and difficulties. They reached them through the concept of “service”, which makes service consumers become providers or, at least, active participants.

They strived to correct the assistance provided to individuals and groups to become founders of their own collective projects, and bet on the importance of the society and on the role of the government institutions based on the comprehensive legal and societal concept.

Yes, they tried with courage, fortitude and hope.

However, wars continued in Lebanon, and tragedies kept cumulating .

Probably, clinging to civic values, constantly practicing professional rules, adhering to human rights and being bold in defending the marginalized and vulnerable people, are all solid foundations that carry hope for the future.

In hope of a better tomorrow.

List of acronyms

قائمة المختصرات

ACSAUVEL	Civil Association for Safety of the Children in Lebanon
BUC	Beirut University College
CRL	Croix Rouge Libanaise
ELFS	École Libanaise de Formation Sociale
THWS	University of Applied Science Würzburg Schweinfurt
IESSA	Institut d'Études en Sciences Sociales Appliquées
IRAP	Institut de Rééducation Audio-Phonétique
IRFED	Institut International de Recherche et de Formation Education et développement
LRC	Lebanese Red Cross
MECC	Middle East Council of Churches
MAS	Ministère des Affaires Sociales
MOSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
NGO	Non- Governmental Organization
SALVE	Service d'Aide au Liban pour Veuves et Enfants
SDC	Social Development Center
SEF	Service de l'Enfant au Foyer
SESOBEL	Service Social pour le Bien-être de l'Enfant au Liban
SIDC	Soins Infirmiers et Développent Communautaire
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UPEL	Union pour la Protection de l'Enfant au Liban
USJ	Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth
YMCA	Young Men Christian Association

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