



Social Work in the Face of Crises and Disasters

Part Two

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

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The projects aim at fostering the resilience of International Social Workers and adequately preparing them for their future work. This is done 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 hand, intercultural exchange and collaborative learning formats in this field are implemented with trainings in conflict transformation, mindfulness based intercultural communication, resilience and community building and thus transforming higher education in Germany, Jordan and Lebanon.

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List of acronyms

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| ACSAUVEL | Civil Association for Safety of the Children in Lebanon |
| BUC | Beirut University College |
| ELFS | École Libanaise de Formation Sociale |
| FHWS | University of Applied Science Würzburg Schweinfurt |
| IESSA | Institut d'Études en Sciences Sociales Appliquées |
| IRAP | Institut de Rééducation Audio-Phonétique |
| LRC | Lebanese Red Cross |
| MECC | Middle East Council of Churches |
| MOSA | Ministry of Social Affairs |
| NGO | Non- Governmental Organization |
| SALVE | Service d'Aide au Liban pour Veuves et Enfants |
| SDC | Social Development Centre |
| 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 |

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 Centre” - Mreijeh
6. Experience through the “Social Development Centre” - 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 centres 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 a socio-pastoral work in the northern Bekaa region.

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. However, we are here to recall all these experiences individually and describe in more detail the social initiatives that existed in different regions in Lebanon from 1975-1990.

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.

Methodology

The applied methodology was previously detailed in: “Social work in the face of crises and disasters, Part One 1975-

1990”. However, it is worth mentioning that we paused, particularly through our individual interviews, at some of the most prominent achievements that we tried to collect with honesty and sincerity. It is to be highlighted that in five of our listed below social workers’ experiences, concerned persons were not interviewed directly, but data was indirectly collected through persons who have known them, because they were living abroad or because they passed away.

It is worth noting that interviews were conducted with “specialized social workers” practicing the profession of social work based on a recognized certificate from one of the colleges and institutes in Lebanon that are licensed by the Ministry of Higher Education. Therefore, the unified term of “social workers” is used in this document meaning all the “social workers”.

We declare here that it is not our intention by any means to give preference to one group over another, but rather, our choice is, on the one hand, based on our familiarity with the reality of “social work”, and on the other hand, due to being unable to fully grasp the various specializations, practices, and qualifications of the rest of the social workers.

We all acknowledge that social work is foremost a vocation. The first criterion is the degree of commitment to human dignity and rights, and the potential to provide appropriate care services to the beneficiary with full respect of the professional and human code of ethics.

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 centre 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 period of 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 1975 war, when a number of children who lost their families during the war were welcomed at the dinner table.

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 lunch table. Consequently, he proposed the idea of creating a restaurant to 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, of which Mrs. Kazan took the responsibility with the help of a number of 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. And 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 personal capacity...”.

3- Experiences through the “Mouvement Social”

The experience of the “Mouvement Social” preceded the Lebanese war, as it was founded in 1961, 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 the Bekaa. Evidently, 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 in order 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 by the war years, played a significant and prominent role in various centres 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 programmes in the field of health, medicines, rural and community development, vocational training, working with juveniles in prisons and school re-enrollment programmes, 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 reminding 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” programme, which 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 non-governmental organizations, and local community volunteers. We all know the impact of displacement on the elderly at this stage as they were 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 in launching many programmes 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 programmes 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 own 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 to 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 supported generously aid efforts during the war period but we could not reach them.

5- Experience through the “Lebanese Red Cross Centre-Mreijeh”

Between 1984 and 1988, there was a pioneering experience at the Lebanese Red Cross Centre-Mreijeh by the social worker in charge Mrs. Leila Jaber 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 in order 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 staying at home to their integration in district schools and urging their families to participate in extracurricular activities and other health care or preventive activities.

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

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

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

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

As an example, the “Social Development Centre” in Borj El-Barajneh”, founded in 1971, played a prominent and exemplary role during the war in terms of diversity and number of programmes, 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 centre 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.

A number of social workers worked in this centre 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, that 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 programmes 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 of time; 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 centre 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,

with the aim of shaping 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 in social institutions, as is customary in orphan cases and in 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 Centres 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’s donation 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 centres under the Directorate General of Social Affairs and the 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 programme covered many levels, extending from financial aid, and essential family services such as health and education, to the vocational rehabilitation programmes for mothers, and 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 has shifted to addressing the domestic violence issue, thus turning into a centre 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 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 centres 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 programmes 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 centres. Such a pilot programme was carried out in the village of “Qenia Akroum” in Akkar district, in which the director of the ELFS, Mrs. Marie Naltchayan, at that time has contributed with great efficiency and determination. Furthermore, she provided financial and moral support to the project despite the war circumstances and moving difficulty and dangers. Mrs Foutine Audi, a social worker of the Council of Churches played an active role in this programme, as her determination to overcome the challenges was the key element in the work success. In addition to the educational sessions, this programme 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, at 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 took the decision to engage in relief work since the beginning of the Lebanese war. As a result, this experience was launched in Biaqout, 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 a large number of challenges, perhaps the most difficult one being dealing with the conflicts between displaced people coming to “Biaqout”, the remaining families who were living before in the neighborhood and those who returned to it.

In response to these needs, the “Social Health Care Centre” 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 centre was turned into a “Social Centre”, which provided evening classes and a youth club beside 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 favour 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 in order 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, 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. A number of social workers living there made an active contribution and cooperated closely with this aforementioned NGO.

Additionally, the social workers 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 programmes 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, beside 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 health care, educational and social programmes, direct work with families, awareness programmes with women and girls, mentoring and counselling programmes with young men and women, recreational, cultural and environmental programmes with children, and development programmes.

One of the most important achievements was purchasing and equipping a building in Karm El-Zeitoun to become a legitimate social centre 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 has been 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 provide assistance in 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 distribution of water, bread, medicines, milk for babies, taking care of elderly and waste management. That team counted the number of residents and listed them by names, 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 the 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, programmes 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 a large number of 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 a number of social workers, volunteers and non-

governmental organizations, launched a project called the “ rapid social intervention”, at the stage that follows the intervention of the civil defence and the Red Cross teams in order to contribute to alleviate 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 fill 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 YMCA, which supported this intervention between 1986 and 1987, which covered six residential quarters in Beirut that were affected by car bombs 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 large number of families that have 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 done with those families to help them to adapt to a new social and geographical reality, to assist them in running their lives, and gradually and steadily prepare them either 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 programmes.

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 specially 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 the intensive training for their students. The majority of institutes have not stopped working during that period of 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” to the professors to allow to teach their students at a house provided by one of the social workers to accommodate students and facilitate their education. This initiative had 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, Haigazian 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 centres have been involved in relief work. Perhaps, the experience of the “NGOs

Platform of Saida” deserves to be considered, where, in 1980, after the Israeli invasion, and through the dispensary’s 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 at the municipality and an active presence since 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 followed the displacement of Damour people and their arrival by sea in small boats to Kaslik beaches. Many associations and individuals rushed to shelter and assisted them, including the head of Rabieh municipality, Mrs. Nabila Fares, who was 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 on each room. Mrs. Fares said: “We organised 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 weekly rotated. The rules were applied to everyone in a thoughtful way, as respect of 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 in the midst of 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 programmes. 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 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 the social environment, 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 centres 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 centres 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 in order to give people their rights. She believed in the importance of the 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 for 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 got 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 where 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 which 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 to maintain 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 Centres". 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 the 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 centres 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 Centre” was closed, as well as the “Rehabilitation Institute in Yarze” and the “Gemmayzeh home in Beirut”, which was welcoming the juveniles as soon as they leave the rehabilitation institute in order to prepare and re-engage them in society.

Everyone at “Al-Fanar Centre” 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 centre told me: I shall come back to visit you; if I had 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 Centre for war disabled” was established in early 1976s. One of its essential goals was the rehabilitation of people with disabilities. Many specialists worked at that centre, including social workers who took upon themselves the responsibility of assisting these people families, socially, economically and in their lives. Due to the increasing numbers and in order to follow up on the disabled who left Beit Chabeb centre and to help them reintegrating their environment, another centre in Sin el-Fil emerged with a direct support from the “Department of Social Welfare”. The management of this centre was entrusted to a social worker, Mrs. Marie-Rose Rahme Awwad who worked at “Beit Chabeb Centre 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 programmes; 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 centre 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 programmes, and cooperation with the associations and institutions supporting our work”.

24- Experience through a 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 in 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 area 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 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 own way; external war and internal war, as one of his acquaintances said.

He assisted in building agricultural roads, water canals, purchased the necessary tools for agriculture, and contributed to the construction of schools and dispensaries, providing conference and meeting rooms, improving roads and ensuring better living conditions, as far as possible, in difficult security and living circumstances. Moreover, he established a sewing workshop for women that still exists until today. All those initiatives and projects had gradually changed the conditions of a large number of families. He launched projects, sought funding sources, 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 helping themselves; of course, beside 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 had the ability to observe, in addition to his methodical and meticulous nature, seriousness, moral rigour, 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 toward 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 own 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 work had 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 in Lebanon, 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.

