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EDITORIAL



By Dr. Kamel Mohanna, President of Amel Association

Ever since the last events in May, Lebanon has been going through a reconciliation atmosphere. After the Doha agreement that put an end to the conflicts, the Cedar country chose a new President, constituted a government of national union and undertook the change of the electoral law. Also, on the international level, major marches have taken place. Thus, for the first time since the independence of both countries, Lebanon and Syria have started to establish diplomatic relations.

While the United States is about to elect a new President, the present period is for sure a period of transition, a lull period in term of security. We have to take advantage of it.

As the international economical crisis reaches the whole world and the Lebanese population suffers a little bit more every day, the Lebanese government must launch essential economical and social reforms from now on. Until now, its program needs clearness and steadfastness.

At Amel and thanks to our work in the field, we have identified the priorities that should constitute the basis of a governmental reform. The first priority has to do with equality between the center and the rural, deprived areas that suffer in particular a lack of medical and social facilities. Regarding education, it is essential to enforce the law. The school should be obligatory and free for every child until the age of 14. In addition, a plan of health accessibility must be implemented. Today, nearly half of the Lebanese population doesn't enjoy any kind of insurance or social security.

Our work at Amel is definitely targeting these dilemmas. In our daily work, we fight against sectarianism, political or cultural, in order to build citizenship. With a non-confessional spirit, we try to be a catalyst within the Lebanese civil society and to provide basic services and equipments to the most deprived people.

Thanks to those quality services, provided at a symbolic cost, we have been able to develop a relationship with the population based on trust. This special relationship allows us then to work on development projects in order to promote a culture of rights. We work with everybody: Lebanese, Palestinian, Iraqi... Every single project that we implement, either with the international NGOs, United Nations agencies or embassies, whether related to health or development, pursues a more global objective. It is time for each protagonist of the civil society and the government to emphasize on the building of a culture of rights for all instead of encouraging confessional structures.

Lebanon abounds with excellent human resources. We have to use them in the framework of a developmental strategy and get rid of the division spirit and individual hegemony.

At Amel, we go by the "Positive thinking and permanent optimism". Together, step by step, we can change the situation. After all, as the great Nelson Mandela has said, "Vision with action can change the world".

●●● The centers of Amel

Ersal center, 26 years of medical and social services



Ersal is a small Lebanese town which is found in the Bekaa valley close to the Syrian borders. Its number of inhabitants is 40 thousand, most of them live below the poverty line and they depend on rock quarries and agriculture for living. This country is considered as an abandoned area in term of medical facilities, for it doesn't even have a hospital. Amel association in Ersal was found in 1982 and it was the first health care center to be established in that area, it aimed at helping people getting medicated and at sensitizing them health-wise.

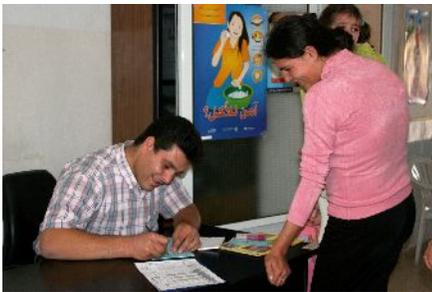
Ersal center has primary health care services, a pharmacy, an ophthalmic unit, a dental clinic and an ultra sound Unit. The center also provides women and children's health programs, reproductive health and family planning programs, vocational Training (Nursing

- Hair-Dressing - Computer), and it held vaccination campaigns regularly. At the moment, for example, the center in Ersal is collaborating with UNICEF to launch free vaccination campaigns for the children.

Amel center in Ersal receives more than 35 patients a day, most of them come from deprived families and suffer tough living conditions. Amel seeks to help by offering them free medications and examinations. As for sensitization, the doctors tend to educate the residents about first aid, Prevention of diseases, Treatment of simple illnesses, Supplying basic drugs and CPR, etc...

Sometimes amel faces several obstacles and difficulties while treating its patients, especially the ones who suffer critical wounds or damages. The director of Ersal center said: *"here the people work around quarries and rock crushers, most of the situations we receive are somehow difficult to cure, and some of them need surgery. We can't provide that, so we do the best we can to send them to the hospital in Baalbek, which is 40 km away."* According to her *"the fact that there is no hospital in Ersal makes everything difficult especially for pregnant woman, which leads them to deliver during their way to the hospital"*. Regarding sensitization needs, she explains: *"At first, people in Ersal didn't accept the idea of their children being vaccinated, they thought they were getting sick out of nothing, but thank to our sensitization sessions, people started to bring their children more often, and we really succeeded in that"*.

Amel relationship with the population in Ersal is based on respect and trust. By seeing the smile on people's faces, one can understand how Amel center is appreciated for the serious work it has done for the past 26 years.



General practitioner and specialists during consultations at Amel center in Ersal

●●● News of the projects:

ECHAAV Project: organization of two kermesses



"Empowering Children and Adolescents to fight against Violence in Lebanon" (ECHAAV) is a project of Amel and funded by the NGO "Save the children Sweden" that started in March 2008. This project aims at contributing in ending violence against children and women in Lebanon.

In the framework of this project, an important group of children and adolescents are identified through specific activities such as recreational activities, drama or outings. Focus groups, art therapy, and individual counseling targeting children and parents are also conducted by a psychologist.

In order to bring together parents, children and social workers in a relaxing and fun environment, Amel organized two kermesses in Mreijeh (Southern Suburbs of Beirut) and Kamed el Loz (Bekaa) in early September. Those events included recreational and fun games. Moreover the children performed plays about violence against women and children, in order to illustrate the negative effects of violence and to call for their rights and specifically their right of protection against violence. The objective of those kermesses and the project in general is to introduce the various rights to the children and the duties of the parents towards their children, in an educational and recreational way.

Agreement between AUB and Amel

An agreement was signed and entered into on June 16, 2008 between the AUB medical center and Amel association, whereas AUBMC will be providing professionals with expertise in health management to give medical consultation at Amel Community center in Chiah for Iraqi Refugees.

The center in Chiah opened in July 2007 thanks to the support of UNHCR. Different services are provided such as remedial classes and recreational activities for children or literacy courses, vocational trainings and leisure activities for adults.

The purpose of the agreement with AUBMC is to provide Iraqi refugees with their essential medical needs and provide as well ambulatory services within the Center in Chyyah. In addition to that, the department of family medicine at AUBMC will avail electronic computerized medical records software for use at the dispensary and will participate in practice management of the center. Such services are really important and necessary for the refugees especially that they are going through tough and difficult situations due to poverty and displacement. Thanks to this new agreement with AUB, the refugees can now benefit from medical consultations 3 times/week.

Youth exchange program in Lebanon

Amel is launching a youth exchange program in December in Ebel Isaqi center, with the collaboration of the European commission and the ministry of youth and sports. The exchange program will bring together four groups composed of six participants and a group leader. The young participants (between 18 and 25 years old) come from the following countries: Lebanon, Greece, Finland and Palestine.

The execution of the youth exchange program will be preceded by an advanced planning visit, where the leaders of the participating groups will meet and discuss practicalities, logistics, roles, programs, activities, workshop, and all issues related to proper implementation of the planned action.

The main objective of the proposed youth exchange is to promote mutual understanding and tolerance between different participants through a series of activities that will last seven days. The planned activities should reflect the principle of intercultural learning adopting non-formal educational tools with special stress on peer to peer methodology.

During the program, four workshops are being implemented that intend to teach other participants about artistic items or behavior that reflects part of the culture of the country, and an exhibitions is going to be opened as well. It is going to be as a space for the participants to have an overall image of the experience they have been living during their stay in Lebanon, and also a way to extend the visibility of the donors to larger public.

At the end of the program a seminar is going to be held, and the participants will cooperate to produce a learning tool that can be used in valorization stage to extend the impact of this experience to other youngsters in their communities.

●●● Amel in brief

- French "Société d'entraide des membres de la légion d'honneur" (SEMLH) visited amel southern centers



Responding to the invitation of Dr. kamel Muhanna, the president of Amel association and a member of the SEMHL, a committee that bring together the people rewarded by the French "Legion of Honor", the president and the members of the board rendered a visit to the centers of Amel association in Marjeyoun area: its health care center in Kham and its agricultural cooperative and soap factory in Ebl- el saqi.



The group of representatives included, the former minister Michael Edde and his 2 parliament members, the minister of culture Tamam Salam and Sheikh Michael Khoury, the secretary general of

the board Morris Ghazal, the members Hisham shaar and his wife, and French General Vigor. Talal Salman, a member in the trusteeship board and the editor of Assafir newsletter responded to the invitation as well.

The tour ended at a banquet in the Hasbani Park where the member of the administrative board Ibrahim Byadoun and the association members Mohammad Slayman , Aziz Muhanna, Asaad Rachid and Malek Khoury in addition to Dr. Kamel met the group of the representatives.

The group praised the efforts of Amel Association in health care and humanitarian domains.

- AUB students at Amel center in Kham

A group of students from the American University of Beirut (AUB), headed by Dr. Mounir Mabsout and Dr. Khaled Jojo, visited the health care center of Amel Association in Kham, the soap factory and the agricultural cooperative in Ebl al Saqi, with Dr. Kamel Mohanna, the president of Amel association and Dr. Mohammad Sleiman, the responsible of Amel centers in Marjayoun area.

The visit aimed at introducing the different activities of Amel Association and at reinforcing the collaboration between Amel and the American University.

Dr. Kamel Mohanna spoke about the role of the students and their supervisors to work and volunteer at the rural areas that suffered a historical neglect. He also spoke about the creation of a mutual development assessment between the civil society and the universities of Lebanon that would later be followed by the ministries and administrations as a development national policy for the sake of the nation.

The group also visited Kham former prison and the visit ended up with a dinner at al Hasbani Park.

- New brochure about osteoporosis



Amel has published a new brochure about osteoporosis that lists information about this common disease: definition, causes, symptoms, diagnosis and way of treatment. The brochure will be distributed in the medical centers of Amel and will be used as a sensitization tool.

The leaflet was produced in the framework of a project supported by the Italian embassy in Lebanon that aims at encouraging the screening and the treatment of Osteoporosis.

All of this will be an introduction to inform the targeted population of around 800-1000 women in the areas such as Kham, Ibl el Saki and Dibin in the village of Marjayoun about the dangers of Osteoporosis and encourage them to diagnose it at an early time. The activities include awareness campaigns, reception of Calcium and Vitamin D and the treatment of Osteoporosis.

- Closing of the summer school in Chiah

Amel center in Chiah organized a remedial classes program for summer targeting children of ages 7 to 16, in the following subjects: Math, English and Arabic. Moreover, the school provided awareness lessons concerning children rights, self-hygiene, nutrition, and held debates among children about the moral and social values within our community in addition to movie shows and theatre lessons.

At the end of the program, the students took an exam in the mentioned subjects and were evaluated according to their level.

During the closing day, the school invited the parents to attend the graduation ceremony of their children, where the teachers distributed the certificates to the students and offered presents and gifts for those who had high scores in their classes. Then, a party was thrown which included playing games, a singing contest, distributing presents, a movie show, and the students illustrated as well a play about "the importance of being active" at the end of the ceremony.

The activities of the school and the center in Chiah don't end at the summer, it continues to provide different services including remedial classes, drawing and theatre lessons during winter season, in order to keep in touch with the students and follow up their progress.

- New brochure about child abuse

Amel Association published a new brochure entitled: "Child abuse in Lebanon. Guide Health provider protocol for child abuse: Screening, intervention, and referral." This brochure was produced in cooperation with "Save the Children Sweden" and Kafa associations. It targets medical and social workers and aims at informing them on detection and referral of cases of violence.

The booklet defines the term "child abuse" and lists the types and risk factors of abuses. It explains how one should deal with the children (in different ages) that have been abused, the right way to interview them in a suitable and secure atmosphere to make sure that they can talk freely and confidently.

The brochure also covers the mechanism of assessing and evaluating the situation of the patient, and the role of the doctor in the screening and intervention. In addition, it explains the dangerous effects of physical, sexual and emotional abuse on children and their development.

In the last pages, the brochure provides a list of telephone numbers and addresses of national committees that can be contacted for more information and help.

- Opening of two health centers in Halta and Fardis



Amel opened two primary health care centers in Halta and Fardis (Hasbayya area), in the presence of the president of Amel Association Dr. Kamel Mohanna, the representative of UNICEF Fatima Odaymat representatives of the parliament municipality presidents and numerous inhabitants.

The centers were opened thanks to the support of UNICEF in the framework of the project "Promoting access to health care in Lebanon: prevention, sensitization, and early warning system building". This project aims at reinforcing medical facilities and developing prevention and sensitization to health issues in the most rural and deprived areas.

After the ribbons cutting, Dr Mohanna made a speech in which he called for setting a social-economic plan which aims at providing social services such as education, health care, social security networks and programs to end poverty.

Dr. Mohanna demanded to develop a culture of dialogue and collaboration in Lebanon and thanked UNICEF for their support and concern about the situation of the population.

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