

The Lebanese Civil Society

Issues and Perspectives

The AFKAR 2 Program

Roundtable Debates

Foreword

The Minister of State for Administrative Reform
H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Chamseddine



No state can be established without a society, and it is for the sake of society that it is established.

The state that exists for its own sake is transformed into a repressive authority and a tool of coercion.

The strong state is the one that emanates from a strong society characterized by its coherence, its awareness of its role, and its natural and legal rights.

It is a society whose members do not surrender, a society bound together by communication and dialogue among its citizens, be they from the north, the south, be they dwellers of plains, mountain feet, the coast, or the mountains.

Such society is made up of men, women, the elderly, as well as ill and healthy people, workers and managers, emigrants and residents, believers and secularists, couples and individuals.

These and others make up the society out of which the state is established, or rather emanates from it to serve them and derive its legitimacy from them and from the services it renders them all, not just some of them, with the consent and confidence of all.

This society and those people have the right to know more, learn more, improve their life conditions, be aware of their rights as time goes by while they share in public responsibilities so that the state does not dominate them. They are subject to the state authority while they oversee it at the same time.

Associations are founded for the sake of all those people and out of them all. Such associations work on filling gaps, meeting needs, solving problems, clarifying ambiguities, drafting texts where they are lacking, developing defenses where there is vulnerability, and creating force in the community undermined by dissension, ignorance, neglect, or marginalization.

For the sake of all those people who are you and all of us, the idea of Afkar emerged.

Afkar has been launched to serve civil society, its components and associations to enable them to achieve noble goals or seek guidance in the labyrinth of the intricacies of the law, or where the law is lacking or flawed.

Afkar has been launched to promote children's rights and women's rights, to establish communication and dialogue, and to promote creativity and arts.

Afkar addresses the concerns of the elderly and the children while it promotes coherence and unity, and defense and resistance to aggression. It aims at developing humans and consolidating state building ... Afkar aims at ensuring the continuity and the preservation of the state.

The Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform is one of the ideas or "afkar" working to further your interests, and through Afkar, it works along with you.

May peace be upon you.

Elite Activism and the Magic Rod

Younna Chacar Ghorayeb¹

Questions could be raised about the usefulness of holding debates on sensitive matters handled by representatives of civil society organizations at a time changing the approach to dealing with these matters faces complex problems. Some people would even cast serious doubt and express fears of what is described as an elitist performance of such types of activities. These two attitudes could be justified by a deep desire to quickly reach complete solutions and concrete results of any activities, particularly when they are aimed at promoting the concept of the fair state, the state of citizenship, as well as encouraging dialogue away from violence and discrimination.

In the framework of the Afkar II Program, the Office of the Minister for Administrative Reform (OMSAR) held between January 2008 and April 2009 eight roundtables or dialogue seminars organized by The Émergences Foundation for technical assistance². In those roundtables the basic issues discussed are closely related to the spirit of the program itself on the one hand, and to the concerns of Lebanese civil society and community

¹ The Afkar Program Coordinator

² The Afkar II Program has been created to offer support to Lebanon's civil society. The program received a three-million-euro grant from the European Union and is managed by OMSAR.

organizations on the other hand. These roundtables have drawn over 300 participants despite the unfavorable security and political conditions in Lebanon. They have also received coverage by the media and the Afkar Program website³; however, in the assessment of their outcome, we cannot but adopt a realistic approach.

It is true that eight dialogue seminars attended by civil society representatives to discuss major issues relating to human rights, the bases of democracy, and dialogue mechanisms are not sufficient in themselves to bring about massive change in broad constituencies. It is true that they cannot turn the table on gender-based discrimination overnight, nor can they enhance inter-youth dialogue in post-violence and post-conflict periods, nor can they prove that drug addicts are ill people, not criminals. It is equally true that these meetings, despite the increasing number of participants each time, cannot alone improve the conditions of volunteerism in NGOs, nor can they harmonize citizens' awareness with healthy environment, nor can they alone establish a full partnership between the mass media and civil society, nor can they generalize a comprehensive solution to post-traumatic problems. Finally, if the seminars have introduced youth initiatives, they will not impose them on society.

In fact, we have never regarded these roundtables as magic rods; we have rather regarded them as a meeting space for the Lebanese people and

3 www.afkar.omsar.gov.lb

active NGOs so that they become acquainted, share their experience, concerns and successes, discuss problems, and put forward recommendations. In these encounters different issues are highlighted, thus allowing the presentation and detailing of related paradoxes. They also create an opportunity to discuss relevant laws and the enforcement mechanisms, and reflect a realistic picture of what is going on so that the participants can come up with new ideas and lay the foundations of future plans.

All these dialogue seminars have complemented a number of activities undertaken by the Afkar II Project with a view to supporting Lebanese civil society and promoting the respect of political and civil rights. The support provided by the program to ensure the implementation of twenty-four NGO programs is two-fold: financial and technical. The diverse initiatives undertaken in their framework are intended to promote the concept of the fair state and citizenship, and to encourage inter-youth dialogue involving different Lebanese communities. On the other hand, these meetings have gone hand in hand with training sessions targeting NGO representatives in various fields. All these activities, particularly the dialogue encounters, have contributed to the establishment of ties among active NGOs, and to laying the foundations of cooperation and probably future networking among them. The discussions are documented in a single book constituting a pool of ideas that can first contribute to the dissemination of awareness

and knowledge about the raised issues. This can pave the way for the development of initiatives and for making decisions that facilitate change and create a society enjoying the freedom of expression, initiative, democracy, and equal rights for all its people.

Seven dialogue seminars have been held in the OMSAR conference room while the eighth one was held at the Grand S rail. However, the official organizational framework of the seminars did not inhibit the freedom of expression, discussion, and critique. As a result, these encounters were mainly characterized by the establishment of a genuine democratic atmosphere without which no discussion can take place and no initiatives can produce a favorable outcome. As for the issues raised and the prevailing atmosphere, they were characterized by variety, liveliness, and even intensity.

The first seminar was titled “Towards a National Strategy for the Abolition of Gender-Based Discriminatory Laws”. The paradox was raised against the background of the struggle led by the feminist movement and its pioneers who fought for women’s rights and made legal contributions in this respect. The reaped benefits include progress in many areas such as suffrage, the right to travel, to work, and the right to schooling, as well as the rejection of domestic violence, crimes of honor, and many others. The organization of such seminars came in response to the need for additional thinking, work, and coordination of efforts in order to consolidate the

principle of justice and human rights as far as women are concerned, away from any form of discrimination in different professional, social, and political areas of life.

The second seminar that was held under the title “The Promotion of Inter-Youth Dialogue in Post-Conflict Periods” represented a glimmer of light in a critical period of unrest and inter-youth confrontations in the streets. Due to the need to translate dialogue into a real meeting of people in the light of socially enriching differences, the raised issue converged with the Afkar Program objectives in promoting the concepts of democracy, citizenship, and the culture of peace on the basis of accepting other people away from violence and discrimination. The seminar was an opportunity to benefit from the experience of organizations active in inter-youth dialogue, knowing that nine of the Afkar programs fall into this category.

In Roundtable III that was held at the Grand Sérail, the issue of drug addiction was raised from the following perspective: “Is the Drug Addict in Conflict with the Law or in Need of Treatment?” The approach adopted was comprehensive and took into consideration the medical, legal, and security aspects of drug addiction. It was attended by a number of authorities on addiction and representatives of organizations active in the field of combating addiction. The participants highlighted the gaps in the enforcement of laws relative to drug addicts and to offering care to the victims of addiction.

As for the issue of volunteerism, it was tackled in Roundtable IV under the theme “The Status of Volunteers in the Organizational Hierarchies of NGOs”. I paused at the volunteerism phenomenon that constitutes a value and virtue that is worth enhancing in civil society activities by promoting their role at the level of planning and evaluation done in community organizations.

Roundtable V focused on the role of the media in promoting civil society concerns and initiatives. The media occupies a major space in the Afkar Program owing to its role in shaping public opinion and in defending its causes. In this roundtable, two issues were raised. The first had to do with the ability of NGOs to create a mass media that covers their activities, organizes their campaigns, and disseminates their ideas for change, while the second issue examined had to do with the space devoted by such media to these organizations and the questions they address.

Roundtable VI was held under the theme “Post-Traumatic Program Approaches: Tasks and Challenges”. Although the theme is very specialized in terms of orientation and methodologies, its impact has a more general character. The discussions centered on how to ensure the sustainability of programs conducted by international organizations in cooperation with local organizations with respect to post-war and post-crisis psychosocial therapies. The departure point for this seminar was the accumulation of psychological traumas resulting from wars, explosions, rounds of violence,

and fear for over three decades.

Roundtable VII revolved around the theme of “The Promotion of the Sense of Citizenship to Foster a Friendly Environment” thus reflecting the convergence of citizenship building and safe environment. The participants discussed the missing links between environmental initiatives undertaken to raise awareness and the translation of awareness into an environmentally friendly conduct at all levels.

The final roundtable had a different flavor. Held over two days under the theme of “A Trip to Afkar”, it brought together the youth benefiting from the projects undertaken by the Afkar II Program. In the first stage, they met at the Sayyidat al-Ber Convent and shared their views, expertise, and discussed suggestions. The following day, they presented a summary of the conclusions they reached to the representatives of the 24 organizations funded by Afkar, and suggested ideas as the basis of future gatherings and networking.

This book has documented the discussion seminars in the hope that it constitutes a useful document offering information on the conditions of Lebanese civil society, and contributing to raising awareness of its concerns. It is on this basis that initiatives can be launched by taking into consideration the realities and dynamism of Lebanese civil society.



**Towards a National Strategy for the
Abolition of Gender-Based
Discriminatory Laws**

January 11, 2008

Modernizing Laws to Activate Women's Role Jean Oghassabian*

We are pleased and honored to see this debate assembly held in the framework of the Afkar II Program in which we launch a series of roundtable debates on issues lying at the heart of the interests of Lebanon's civil society and expressing its concerns, hopes and aspirations, to name but a few!

Holding this convention in the midst of exceptional circumstances and many difficulties reflects our perseverance in implementing plans of action pertaining to the Afkar Program, with a view to ensuring the continuity of purposeful projects aimed at serving our nation. Our commitment is consolidated by the sound and carefully considered bases on which these plans are founded. The formulation of such plans takes into consideration the vital role of Lebanese civil society and the requirements needed to promote and develop it. Today, we reiterate our support for this active role and we hold on to our partnership with civil society, particularly with respect to the approach to issues, when debated, contribute to reform and development at the human, social and legal levels.

In such meetings characterized by a genuine democratic atmosphere and a wide margin of freedom of expression, the old-new paradox, namely

* *Minister of State for Administrative Reform from 19/7/2005 till 11/7/2008*

women's status in Lebanese society, is raised. Since the fifties, women's movements have been struggling for women's rights and for the promotion of their role in scientific, professional and political areas. Many successes have been achieved, but they are not complete yet. The modernization of relevant laws is a key and pivotal means in the activation and development of women's role in serving society, though there is a need for further development and modernization, hence the importance of this assembly held under the title "Towards a National Strategy for the Abolition of Gender-Based Discriminatory Laws".

Through the Afkar Program, we have provided support to initiatives undertaken by Lebanese civil society. We believe in the importance of added value introduced by NGOs activities to public life, particularly with respect to human rights, democracy and dialogue. We regard women's status through its close connection with the concepts of citizenship, away from any discrimination. Consequently, the issue raised today converges with the essence of the Afkar Program course aimed at supporting Lebanese civil society that legally and practically translates this concept into action in many of its projects.

In this assembly I would like to reiterate my thanks to the European Union for supporting the Afkar Program, and to applaud the efforts expended by the European Émergences Foundation for the technical

assistance it is providing. I would like also to thank the participants in this meeting, hoping their discussions will bring about positive results beneficial to women and to society under the umbrella of laws safeguarding the rights of all.



The Lebanese Women's Movement: Paradoxes and Priorities

Dr. Khatoun Haydar*

It is hard to give a brief definition of the role and strategies of the Women's Movement organizations. For this reason, I will start the discussion with a brief presentation on women's conditions in Lebanon in comparison with other countries. In sum, I will present the achievements and what remains to be achieved.



This presentation will be followed by an attempt to determine the paradoxes and priorities in the presentation that Dr. Amal Dibo will deliver on a sample of a pioneering experiment in the history of the Lebanese Women's Movement. Then Dr. Fahmiyyeh Charafeddine will deal with the sector plan on women that was prepared as part of the national plan on human rights in Lebanon.

Then, we open the debate hoping that our dialogue constitutes the start of cooperation between all the participants with the aim of unifying efforts and focusing on the main issues, so that our studies do not remain ink on paper and our rights unfulfilled hopes.

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The issue of women’s exercise of their political rights in general, and of their voting right in particular, drew the attention of thinkers, politicians and law experts in the last quarter of the 19th century. The enforcement of women’s voting right goes back to the early 20th century when electoral legislation in some countries granted women the right to participate in elections, as displayed in the following table:

Recognizing the right of every person to participate in running public life in their country, directly or through freely chosen representatives, and wishing to make men and women equal regarding the enjoyment and exercise of political rights, electoral legislation in some foreign countries granted women the right to participate in elections.

1917	Netherlands	1949	Syria
1918	UK	1950	India
1919	Germany	1953	Lebanon
1920	USA	1953	Mexico
1921	Sweden	1920	USA
1944	France	1956	Egypt
1945	France	1971	Switzerland
1946	Japan	1944	France

Women's struggle in Lebanon has not been separate from the long historical path pursued by women in most countries worldwide. Lebanese women have struggled in support of just Arab causes and participated in the struggle for independence. Therefore, their quest for full political and social rights has been normal. In this framework, Lebanese women have realized the significance and necessity of expending joint efforts.

Thus, in 1952, women bodies in Lebanon held a meeting, and thanks to the efforts of pioneering women, both "The Lebanese Arab Women Union" (established in 1929) and "The Lebanese Women Solidarity" (established in 1947) merged in an incubator called "the League of Lebanese Women's Associations" (later named The Lebanese Women's Council).

As a result of joint efforts, Lebanese women had their first main achievement in 1953, namely the right to vote and to run for elections. This ushered in the start of the new Lebanese Women's Movement.

On the basis of the deep-rooted belief that the rule of law is the backbone of building a balanced and fair society, the Lebanese Women's Movement has struggled to amend laws unfair to women and to accelerate the ratification of laws enabling them to play their natural role in the decision-making process.

We present in the list below a summary of the main achievements of the Lebanese Women's Movement in the struggle to free Lebanese legislation from provisions discriminating against women.

The achievements of the Lebanese Women's Movement at the legal level (1953-2004):

- 1953: Recognition of women's political rights (to vote and to run for election).
- 1959: Establishment of equality in inheritance rights between men and women for non-Muslims.
- 1960: Recognition of women's right to choose their nationality.
- 1974: Recognition of women's freedom of movement without the husband's authorization.
- 1983: Abrogation of laws sanctioning contraception.
- 1987: Standardization of the retirement age for men and women in Social Security Law (64 years).
- 1993: Recognition of women's eligibility to testify in real estate registers.
- 1994: Recognition of women's entitlement to engage in trade without the husband's authorization.
- 1994: Entitlement of women in the diplomatic service to keep their positions after marrying a foreigner.
- 1995: Eligibility of married women to benefit from life insurance policies.
- 1996: Lebanon's ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (with reservations on three articles, particularly Article 16 on equality in family laws, and Article 9 on equality regarding

the Naturalization Law).

1999: Partial amendment of Article 562 of the penal code on crimes of honor (abrogation of the plea of release, and preservation of the second part on extenuating circumstances).

2000: Amendment of the following articles in Labor Law No. 207:

Article 26: Prohibition of gender-based discrimination by employers.

Article 28: Asserting the entitlement of working women to take a seven-week maternity leave.

Article 29: Payment of full salaries to women on maternity leave, and the prohibition of their dismissal or of issuing a warning against them during maternity leaves.

Article 52: Prohibition of issuing warnings to pregnant women

2001: Enactment of Law 343 on equality between female and male staff members with regard to:

- retirement and dismissal regulations;
- benefiting from the allowances of the Civil Servants' Cooperative stipulated in regulations on allowances, services, and scholarships. This applies to women and their family members, including husband and children, whether women receive such compensations on their behalf or not, as it applies to persons who are in the custody of the women in question;
- the entitlement of the Lebanese female staff members

married to foreigners to benefit, on behalf of their husbands and foreign children, from all the allowances of the Civil Servants' Cooperative in case they do not benefit from other sources.

2002: Amendment of provisions in Article 14 of the Social Security Law as follows:

- the term beneficiaries means “both men and women members without any discrimination”; and
- the allowances received by women beneficiaries are considered as an acquired right for them and their children.

2003: Amendment of Articles 625, 626, 627 and 628 of the commercial law by eliminating discrimination against women regarding the conduct of commerce.

A reading of the above list reveals that the Lebanese Personal Status Law has not been modified since the amendment of the Inheritance Law in 1959.

It should be noted that laws pertaining to personal status, i.e. those regulating the issues of marriage, divorce, alimony, and custody of children assume a major significance as they regulate relations between family members and the duties and rights of men and women, thus dealing with the essence of private life. Such laws also play a crucial role in regulating state-citizen relationships.

Lebanon lacks a unified family law. Each one of the 19 religious communities is in charge of organizing its “personal” affairs separately. As a result, the individual and the family are subordinate to the religious authorities, which hinders the creation of a single Lebanese national identity unifying all Lebanese men and women. As for citizen equality, the existence of different laws and courts for different communities compromises the principle of equality before the law.

Regarding women’s rights, such a law may enable conservative groups to demand that women be deprived of some of their rights in the name of religious, ethnic or cultural differences. From a different and equally significant perspective, this law means giving different rights to women belonging to different religious communities and areas, thereby diluting the struggle led by Lebanese women.

Personal status issues have always been a top priority for women activists in both the Arab and the Islamic Worlds. The question of authority regarding personal status has generated plenty of discussions and polemics. Unfortunately, Lebanese women have been unable to play a pioneering role in this respect, in a way that matches their achievements in other fields.

Similarly, the Lebanese Women’s Movement has lagged behind its counterparts in the Arab World as regards Naturalization Law, one of the most controversial laws in Lebanon.

The amendment of the Naturalization Law is aimed at bridging the gap created by gender-based discrimination and represented by the inability of Lebanese women to grant the Lebanese nationality to their children, while

Lebanese men are entitled to give it automatically to their wives and children. Such inequality between men and women denies Lebanese women a basic citizen right and denies the children a basic human right, thus bringing about tragic consequences at the social and human levels.

It is important to examine the major relevant conventions that Lebanon adheres to:

- The main (relevant) conventions Lebanon has adhered to:
- The Underground Work (Women) Convention, 1937 (ratified in 1946).
- The Night Work (Women) Convention, 1948 (ratified in 1977).
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.
- The International Convention on the Political Rights of Women, 1953 (ratified in 1955).
- The International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, 1949, and the Supplementary Convention, 1956.
- The UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, 1964.
- Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (ratified in 1977).
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1972.
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1972.
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1996 (Lebanon made reservations about

the issues related to the Naturalization Law, Article 9 of the convention, and to Personal Status Laws, Article 16 of the convention).

- The Universal Declaration on the Elimination of Violence.

We see in this list that since 1996, the year when Lebanon signed The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), it has not signed to date a large number of international conventions. Analysts attribute it to Lebanon's ongoing reservations about the Naturalization Law (Article 9 of the convention) and about the Personal Status Law (Article 16 of the convention).

The objective of this presentation is to shed light on the many remaining future achievements dealt with in the workshop on women's rights as an integral part of human rights. Therefore, it is necessary to formulate a plan in which priorities are reordered, and pressing needs take precedence over those requiring long-term work.

We present below the major issues that would constitute, if you agree, the basis of our discussion today.

What should be achieved to carry on with freeing Lebanese legislation of all provisions discriminating against women:

- The achievement of equality between maternity and paternity in relation to granting nationality to children.
- The annulment of penal code provisions unfair to women, including those pertaining to what is wrongly called "crimes of honor", and the

annulment of the provisions on adultery, in addition to humanizing provisions sanctioning abortion.

Measures aimed at the enforcement and enactment of necessary laws that would, in time, bring about the desired development that is essential to the continuity of life:

- The creation of laws promoting equality, such as a unified and optional civil law on personal status.
- The formulation of provisions prohibiting gender-based discrimination in all fields, to be sanctioned with deterring measures.
- Acquainting female and male citizens with their rights, so that they can exercise them and contribute to their development.
- The ratification of international and Arab conventions; acquainting people with them, and adhering to them.
- Following up law enforcement to narrow the gap between the legal text and its enforcement.
- The facilitation of judicial consultations, particularly by providing free legal consultations, and by increasing the number of judges.
- Following up legislation activities and the discretionary ruling of courts to prevent the creation of texts or the consolidation of discretionary ruling unfair to women.

Laure Moghaizel: A Pioneering Experiment from Lebanon

Dr. Amal Dibo*

Our decision to shed light on Laure Moghaizel’s experiment as a pattern to follow in the struggle for women’s rights and in promoting their participation in public life enables us to examine a successful experiment with a view to underlining the features of her success on the one hand and to using them in women’s activism at present.



Laure Moghaizel who died ten years ago is still an eminent and exemplary figure in the struggle for women’s advance towards their self-fulfillment and their participation in building a society where justice and equality prevail.

In her personality two essential characteristics can be identified: intelligence and sensitivity. Her intelligence channeled into furthering public interest in a highly professional way explains her success. She used to consider personal talents as debts we should pay in citizenship action and believed that “We are all citizens”, the title of a book she wrote. Her

* *University professor and researcher*

sensitivity was the springboard for her openness and sympathy for different people, hence her feeling as a fortunate woman in charge of less favored fellows. Both characteristics distinguish Lebanese women in general due to the natural and social make-up of the country, its history and its geographical location. However, Laure enhanced both characteristics with great efforts and seriousness, and managed to rise from the status of an average female citizen to the pattern of the universal female citizen. Her efforts and her serious commitment constitute the first feature of her distinction.

Like most of her female co-citizens, Laure spoke three languages, but she fully mastered literary Arabic, without having a parallel among her female contemporaries in a society dominated by the French language at that time, especially as far as university education and law studies were concerned. To her perfect Arab writings, she added the rigor of the western mind, its accuracy and consciousness. She hated long discourses and devoted attention to comas and letters to convey specific meanings and to reassert her positions. She gave the letter “waw in Arabic” (i.e. “and”) a great value in the distinction between terms joined by conjunctions, each having a value of its own. She did not see in the conjunction “waw” the power to make a conjunction create an accumulation or a repetition of the same meaning.

This is a sample of her scrupulous attention to detail, similar to her

boldness on key issues. There is no room for pleonasm and redundancy in her writing. Laure respected the word for the meaning and attitude it carries, and mastered its use as a result. We can see in her use of the language and verbal expression another feature of her success in persuasion and assertion of opinion through a crystallized rigid arrangement of meanings and words.

Her activism in the feminist movement

Laure studied Law and that might be the most effective prelude to her struggle in the field of human rights. During her studies, and along with her activism in the Kata'eb Party, she was in charge of the Female Student Department in this party. At that time, the Women's Council was a living cell engaged in limited, though eminent, social and political activities. Laure joined the council and struggled along with pioneering fellows to acquire women's suffrage. The argument was that women, like men, have the right to vote, whether they are educated or illiterate, as part of their participation in nation building. These efforts were rewarded and the work of the Women's Council soared. The collective efforts expended by the most fortunate women in the service of women's cause in Lebanon produced a pioneering image of women's struggle in Arab societies. We heard Laure say that she was proud to have been trained in women's movements, accompanied by whom she called pioneering women that

deserve to take credit for their perseverance. Such names include Ibtihaj Kaddoura, Emilie Fares Ibrahim and Laure Tabet. She kept recalling them with great pride till the last day of her life. Using the same pattern, she trained the young ladies who worked with her or shared in national struggle regardless of their professional background. We saw her, support and encourage women lawyers, teachers, journalists, nurses, volunteers and men volunteers. She particularly supported the appointment of women as judges, thanks to the efforts she expended in this regard.

The commitment of the young Laure Moghaizel and her party fellow Joseph to party activism and to professional activities soon developed and involved all the components of the nation. It expanded from the mere legal field to the field of human and humanitarian rights, and to a call for the activation of the state resting on institutions, in the belief of living up to the ideals of justice, equality, freedom and democracy. While she and her husband Joseph asserted Lebanon's commitment to Arabism and its contribution to the promotion of human rights in its Arab environment, Laure avoided legal debates, intellectual squabbles and quarrels lost in the mazes of personal interests. She adopted a scientific approach and was distinguished as a researcher restricting herself and others to texts and facts. Consequently, she was able to produce considerable impact and great effectiveness.

What distinguished her?

Laure wrote a book, a sort of a long, exhaustive, accurate, inclusive and comprehensive study in which she compared Lebanese legislation with the text of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Her book became a reference, even the sole reference for whoever wishes to work on “freeing Lebanese legislation from discrimination against women”.

The subtle expression “freeing legislation” is attributed to her tactfulness in the choice of words. She refused to see Lebanese legislation accused of discriminating against women, while she expressed her pride in Lebanon’s contribution to drafting The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, through Mr. Karim ‘Azkoul and Dr. Charles Malik.

How did she use to work?

In addition to her involvement in party activities and in legal professional work, Laure believed in collective and institutional work. With the same seriousness she believed in the initiatives of the members of these institutions, owing to the talents, competencies and innate qualities of each of these individuals. She believed as well in the need for coalition, cooperation and mutual assistance in the work of the institutions making common demands. She established friendly relations with associations and their heads and invested them all in furthering public interests. She had

great confidence in the support of the Cultural Movement in Antelias and The 'Amel Foundation, and backed their projects as a result.

She also had confidence in the Women's Council in which she worked for many years. She never occupied the position of the president but lent support to all its heads, particularly Mrs. Emilie Fares Ibrahim, with a quasi-presidential force and a leader spirit. She appreciated every individual according to their productivity and established special relations with every woman, in line with the work requirements. She had the ability to gather them all because she had "influence", thanks to her credibility, perseverance, knowledge and devotion. No woman could reject her requests or her call for work.

The key to the successful relations she established with women activists is her recognition of the individual contribution of every woman, of her field of work and her potential, in addition to her recognition of the area of competence relative to each association. Thus, she highlighted positive aspects even when they were hidden, expressed her happiness, and highlighted errors only when they became mistakes not tolerated by scientific integrity. Despite the strict discipline she exercised in her career, she was tolerant of and merciful to mistakes unavoidably made by humans. She was a perfectionist whereas she accepted the vulnerability of others, though reluctantly. Yet, she highlighted positive aspects whenever possible. She acclaimed young women and their commitment, and did not

underestimate their youth, but knew how to get the best from each one of them; therefore, she induced each one to work and supplied her with informational support.

As a radiant individual, Laure is a model, but at the same time she was a leader for her belief in collective work and in the media. She used to prepare for the publication of a news item on law amendments or a potential activity by providing key documents to journalists. She fully trusted them, but knew that she had the duty to consolidate such confidence with knowledge to prevent subjectivity in the drafting of news items and the prevalence of individuals' names, thereby allowing public interest to be overshadowed by personal news items.

I can say that she did not work on human rights, but she rather lived and breathed human rights, especially those unfair to women, as human beings and partners in national life. As soon as her five children grew up, she devoted herself to the struggle for the amendment of laws discriminating against women, because she believed that women are a peace force in society, particularly in Lebanon where the war tore the country apart. Laure demonstrated and loudly asserted her belief in the unity of the Lebanese people. It was on the basis of such belief that she established the Non-Violence Movement.

I said that Laure worked with firmness and infinite accuracy. Furthermore, her success depended on her start from reality and her walk

toward the feasible, while being aware of the boundaries of the feasible in our society.

What does reality consist of?

Three scenes:

The first scene: discriminatory laws, but they are not enforced because indulgence prevails in reality.

The second scene: discriminatory laws and discriminatory reality evidenced by the existing laws.

The third scene: laws favoring women, but not enforced in reality.

Laure showed strong determination to gradually improve the existing conditions with the aim of implementing change without resorting to violence. She believed that non-violence is a force of change in society and at the same time a course of action she followed to have demands met. It starts with a study and careful analysis of the situation; then, the topic is restricted to the material to be modified, and the tools of action are examined. Afterwards, the language of expression is brought to perfection by using an eloquent, accurate, extremely professional, strict, and clear terminology that leaves no room for confusion. At the next stage, Laure strove to rally efforts around it, to ask for help through persuasion, and to arouse enthusiasm in associations and institutions for the issue in question.

Thus, Laure started with the discriminatory laws that were practically bypassed in Lebanon. Then, she focused on the discriminatory observed laws and put forward new ones.

Laure Moghaizel used to adopt the following methodology:

First, she used to choose the law that should be amended;

Second, she used to deeply examine its historical and legal backgrounds, and its enforcement;

Third, she used to explain the reasons necessitating its modification and draft the alternative text with the wording of the expert legislator;

Fourth, she used to mobilize Lebanese women committed to this struggle, bring “us” together, explain as a university professor and struggling leader asking to be provided with full information on the subject;

Fifth, she used to make the necessary contacts to lay the foundations. No doubt, her mission gathered momentum and became more successful when Joseph, her husband and her fellow in the struggle, was elected to parliament. Prior to that, Mr. Auguste Bakhos was the sponsor of such considerable efforts expended by this “great struggler”, as he asserted.

I will give you an example on the pressure she exerted with proficiency and perseverance regarding the law governing women’s work in trade.

Laure prepared the required papers, along with the bill. After we

attended the meeting, we met with the then Minister of Justice, Mr. Bahij Tabbara who positively received the documents from her. The original text that needed amendment stipulated that women are not entitled to conduct business in the field of trade without the consent of their husbands. Laure suggested a text according to which women are allowed to conduct such business, without mentioning men's involvement.

However, we were surprised the following days to read an additional part in this text, mentioning women's entitlement to conduct business in the area of trade if the husband does not make objections. When I read this distortion in the newspapers, I went to her in the early morning and saw her talk on the phone with the minister of justice, forcefully insisting on halting the amendment, in which case the amended law would be more catastrophic than the original one. She kindly but firmly reprimanded him with irrefutable arguments. Upon the termination of the phone call, she asked me to prepare a list of the associations and women that would all meet the minister three days later. Yet, the minister immediately reworded the amendment in accordance with Laure's version. I heard her call him another time to express big thanks with the same vehemence, and to assert her pride in Lebanon and its minister of justice.

The lessons we can learn from her approach include personal initiative characterized by courage, a pioneering spirit, solidity, but always within the framework of national institutions or civil society associations, so that

demands are collectively formulated. She used to devote herself to the burden of professional and legal preparations as prerequisites to making such demands.

How did she use to follow up her work?

Laure did not content herself with law amendments. She endeavored to enforce them in institutions hoping to change social mentality so that men are prompted to enforce them. She particularly sought to train women in the amended laws in order to have them claim their rights and ensure their enforcement. 'Akkar can serve as a good example. The law on women's testimony in real estate matters was amended. In the initial text, it is said that man's testimony equals the testimony of two women, but in the amendment it is said that one woman's testimony equals one man's. When Laure was notified that this law was not enforced in 'Akkar, she was mobilized to rectify the situation and went there personally. I accompanied her and witnessed her recourse to methods of persuasion, and her potential in the use of legal and irrefutable arguments.

Today Laure is one woman incarnated in many fellows

I personally testify to the achievements of pioneering women still dedicating themselves to struggle, each from her angle and with great competence, but sometimes individually and close to isolation. What we

mostly need today is to unite in a national institution guaranteeing that all women's efforts are rewarded and that history is honored, while planning for the future, living in the present, and contributing to raising women's status and to nation building. What we lack is unity, if not coordination, an enfeebled and hollow word due to its repetition to no avail, along with many other words such as networking and communication. We need a real and methodological participation, and carefully considered work strategy handed out to guide women and their associations in their claim of justice and equality before the law. Then, we can offer Lebanese society an example on the worth of women's contribution to the enforcement of human rights and to national life.

The feminist movement is of no avail today unless it involves communication, making joint efforts to come up with methodological planning, and then the assignment of tasks according to competencies. As a result, success is inevitable, and women's success in collective action to have their demands met will be a promising indicator of a nation where justice and equality prevail.

Women constitute a huge potential for change once they are aware of the importance of unifying their competencies for common planning and action. Together we can be a great ideal to follow, but if we move apart, each one of us turns into a leader confined to her corner!

Towards a National Plan for Women's Empowerment Dr. Fahmiyyeh Charafeddine*

The Women's Movement in Lebanon has taken major strides towards the advancement of their cause and restoring their place in society. However, the efforts of this movement have not been appropriately crowned although Lebanon signed in 1996 the convention for the elimination of gender discrimination in laws.



“Towards a National Plan for Empowering Women” is the title of a paper I submitted to the Parliamentary Commission at the Lebanese Parliament. What does this plan consist of? How and by whom is it implemented?

If we look at women's conditions at both the social and legal levels, we realize that women's potential outdoes their social status. This becomes obvious if we examine, for instance, their status with respect to the Inheritance Law, the law pertaining to women's testimony, and other laws.

In this connection, we must consider three levels when dealing with women's issues:

- At the level of law amendment:

Legislation has been minimal in comparison with women's aspirations.

* *Ph.D. in Political Philosophy, university professor and researcher*

Major issues have been raised regarding civil status, nationality, and the penal code, but they have all been met with rejection.

This matter provokes a great deal of controversy especially that the 2002 Arab Development Report highlighted the challenges faced by women in the Arab World as follows:

The amendment of Family Law is essential and constitutes the first step in the national strategy for eliminating discrimination against women. As for the second step, it is necessary to create laws that protect women from violence, particularly domestic violence resulting from inequality. The third step has to do with citizenship and is manifested in the Naturalization Law.

- At the level of women's milieu:

Illiteracy is considerably widespread, hence the need for a special program that safeguards women's right to equality and education, knowing that Lebanon has not ratified conventions protective of women, such as the convention against human trafficking.

It must also be noted that gender discrimination is embodied in school books, especially as regards women's status and image in society.

- At the level of empowerment:

Empowerment is a major step towards sustainable development. The terms of the 2003 Arab Development Report on economic development in the Arab world cannot be met unless women enjoy their rights, and unless governments interfere to offer them assistance, as the empowerment

indicator rests on women's standard.

But who will implement this plan?

It is extremely obvious that such implementation exceeds governments' abilities and involves civil society in both implementation and the establishment of a constructive cooperation between both. The plan is based on equality among citizens and on gender-related norms.

Injustice against Lebanese women must be acknowledged, even if this acknowledgement requires a shift to feasible plans and to programs paving the way for practice!

Therefore, it is the task of both the government and civil society, which necessitates the creation of a coordination and implementation committee, similarly to a laboratory where an efficient implementation mechanism is devised to deal with women's cause.

The Debate

The debate revolved around three issues: the legal aspect, the status and image of women in society, and strategies for women's empowerment. Regarding the legal aspect, discussions covered the multiplicity of projects and advocacy efforts undertaken by different women's networks. Such associations and networks have the potential to amend the existing laws and to draft new ones, but they lack the ability to combine their efforts, to communicate, and to attract the younger generation.

The participants pointed out to the need for legal cooperation with the relevant state institutions so that a new civil law is enacted and penalties are imposed on users of domestic violence against women. In addition, some participants indicated that the state should enforce the existing non-discriminatory laws and that civil society at large does not support women's efforts devoted to effect change.

As for the second issue raised in the debate, it was about the creation of an appropriate social milieu that promotes women's status. In this respect, participants pointed out that first, citizens have to admit the existence of discrimination. Some participants referred to the prevailing legal illiteracy among citizens, and more particularly among women. They also pointed out to the efforts made in reconsidering the image of women in school textbooks and educational programs, as well as to the need to change

women's distorted image in the media.

Furthermore, a discussion of the multiculturalism, the multi-confessionalism, and the demographic makeup of the population resulted in their consideration as some of the basic problems hindering change. An example on the above mentioned obstacles was given by a participant working in a remote and impoverished rural area in the Beka' Valley. She remarked that even small development programs can empower women and attract the youth.

Finally, concerning this point in particular, the participants said that change could be initiated and led slowly at the economic, social, and political levels, but it is certain that change is the result of urging women to share in municipal elections and in community work, as it is the result of empowering them so that they become productive.

On the other hand, regarding the possibility of adopting a strategy for amending laws discriminating against people on the basis of social classes, some participants remarked that change is a very slow process, particularly in our society. Despite the existence of a number of action plans drawn up by ministries and civil society associations, both sectors suffer from poor coordination and a lack of communication. The participants in the debate expressed an urgent need to build horizontal communication channels, to unite efforts, and to promote strong lobbying. The participants also referred to the need to assess the extent to which decision-makers are predisposed to promote this change.

The logo consists of a circle divided horizontally into two halves. The top half is white and contains the word "Round" in a dark blue serif font. The bottom half is dark blue and contains the word "Table" in a white serif font. To the right of the circle is a large, dark blue number "2".

Round
Table 2

**The Promotion of Inter-Youth
Dialogue in Post-Conflict Periods
February 22, 2008**

Dialogue is an Essential Part of the Solution, Reconciliation, and Reconstruction

Mr. Oussama Safa*

First, it is difficult to raise the question of dialogue because it is a quicksilver issue that is hard to control and define exhaustively. It is possible to tackle this issue by focusing on its political dimension, its quality, or both its theoretical and practical dimensions. If we attempt to examine dialogue from the theoretical perspective, we see that there are different schools dealing with peace-making, dialogue and conflict resolution. Some emphasize the prevention, management, resolution or channeling of conflicts, with the latter being an essential part of intra-communal relations that need to be redeveloped.



If we examine the literature on post-war reconstruction, we see that dialogue is an essential part of the processes of resolution, reconciliation and reconstruction (particularly its intra-communal aspect). The conclusions I am reporting are based on field experience, not “clichés”. In this connection, it is important to distinguish between dialogue and debate,

* *Researcher at the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies*

which is often confused with constructive dialogue and reaching unanimity. Here are some major conclusions on dialogue, drawn from the work done in Lebanese villages after periods of violence, and with the Lebanese youth, in the framework of reform campaigns:

- First, the lack of impartiality in the organization of dialogue, and the importance of the unbiased management of such a process, a role usually played by a third party with no power, or clout, and having the necessary skills and commitment to hold dialogue.
- The lack of the win-win culture and the deep-rooted idea of the zero sum game.
- The misunderstanding and misuse of the concept of “unanimity”.
- The reliance on the “leader”, and involving the top of the leadership pyramid in having the final say about critical dialogue issues, rather than taking individual initiatives.
- The absence of an environment conducive to dialogue and fostering its results, as there is no general atmosphere favorable to such processes.
- The lack of support for the dialogue process by the elite, confusion between process and content, and a lack of understanding dialogue rules.
- Confusion between dialogue as a means and as an end.
- Unrealistic expectations of the organizers, potential participants, and

participants in the dialogue (especially among people with similar thinking and aspiring to attain a single objective).

- The need for time and commitment (conduct, ideas and feelings) favorable to dialogue.
- The missing role of the media in supporting and spreading the dialogue culture.
- Stagnation, rather than moving on to the project planning phase following dialogue. In the event such projects exist, they are not sustainable.

Ways to promote inter-youth dialogue:

- The coordination of efforts at the level of the elite, leaders and the grass roots.
- Believing in the outcome of dialogue and its benefits.
- The integration of dialogue with specific and practical projects.
- Highlighting the outcome of dialogue in breaking down the barriers between different communities and in promoting communication.
- Recognizing the differences between the participants in dialogue, but also looking for common grounds.
- Setting a general and specific framework for the dialogue processes (what structure / frame?).

- Adopting alternative dialogue strategies (training, awareness-raising, and capacity building).
- An extremely careful selection of target groups as an essential condition for dialogue success.
- The selection of persons who will play leading roles in social work.

Challenges Met and Lessons Drawn from Youth Debates Experience Gained from Field Work Mr. Karam Abi Yazbek*

In group, we work together to reach our goal all together...

The worst type of violence is intellectual ...

Alienation in one's homeland is worse than emigration...

Unemployment...we are all responsible for it...

The acceptance of "the other" is equivalent to the acceptance of their language, history, thought and color...



Selfishness, violence, emigration, unemployment and rejection of “the other” are topics, titles and problems the Lebanese youth are confronted with. These are not the sole problems facing the youth on whom the future of Lebanon depends. If the future of the country depends on the youth, theirs is a function of their awareness, their acceptance of “the other”, and their willingness to create the culture of dialogue and objectivity.

I will shed light on a field experience aimed at empowering the youth

* *Officer of the Youth Section, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA).*

and boosting dialogue.

The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) carried out an empowerment project for Lebanese young citizens with the support of the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the cooperation of the Lebanese parliament and the Parliamentary Dialogue Forum. The three-year project (September 2004- September 2007) was carried out in the following areas:

Akkar: Gebrayel, Rahbeh, Beit Mellat, Tikrit, Al-Borj

Hasbaya: Khilwat, 'Ain Kanya, Al-Kfeyr, Hasbaya

Kisrwan: Kattin, 'Aramoun, Ghineh, Hiyyata, Chahtoul

Beka: Ablah, Ferzol, Riyyak, Niha.

The general objective of the project is to contribute to the promotion of the Lebanese youth participation in civil society.

The specific objectives are:

- Building individual capacity to enable the youth to participate effectively in the decision-making process regarding issues of concern to them.
- Building ties and communication circles among all the participants in the program, the proper parliamentary committees, and the Forum for Parliamentary Dialogue to develop policies promoting youth participation in the decision-making process.
- Promoting youth participation in civil society by creating networks

- between youth groups and local civil society organizations in particular, by activating dialogue and breaking psychological barriers.
- Promoting the capacity of the Lebanese youth to have access to information on how to influence and participate in institutional work and in the decision-making process. The youth should also be given the opportunity to exchange information and experience, and to network with different youth groups.

The different phases of the project and the activities done in the frame of youth empowerment and dialogue activation:

- The organization of a basic training seminar for the youth on the following topic “Leadership Skills and Good Citizenship”, attended by 300 Lebanese young people from different areas.
- The formation of four youth committees in different areas, whose members attended the basic training seminar, as well as the formation of a committee operating at the national level. These committees ensure communication between the youth and decision-makers, contribute to making suggestions and creating gateways to the formulation of a comprehensive youth policy, supervise the implementation of small pioneering development projects at the local level in order to promote youth participation in public life, and promote dialogue between them and society.

- The organization and running of three advanced training seminars on “Project Planning and Management”, “Computer and Information Technology” and “Defense and Pleading Campaigns Aimed at Influencing Decision-making”, attended by 100 young people who participated in the basic training.
- Organizing and running a training seminar on “The Role of the Youth in Shaping Public Policies”, attended by 22 young people from different areas. This group of trainees forms the so-called “National Committee” which is in charge of putting forward youth issues. This committee is expected to promote communication and dialogue between the youth from different areas, creeds and affiliations so that they get to know “the other”, raise youth issues and identify differences and similarities.
- The production of some material, publications and tools necessary to promote youth participation in public life, the distribution of leaflets about dialogue, accepting “the other”, the rejection of violence, and international conventions on human rights. Similarly, stickers on issues like unemployment, emigration, violence, participation, and accepting “the other” were printed and handed out.



- The follow-up of meetings and coordination with local committees from different areas with the aim of activating the role of youth groups. These youth groups participated in many dialogue assemblies and youth exchange activities. Such youth meetings were held in different Lebanese areas, with a view to getting acquainted with the real social conditions under which those young people live. This makes it possible to eliminate stereotypes imprinted on our minds about different people and societies, and that usually give rise to negative generalizations and prejudices.
- The development of the project's website www.ymca-cep.org; training a coordinator for each region in providing these web pages with the information available on the youth, their projects and initiatives, and trying to get the available information on youth participation in other countries, in addition to the promotion of the "Forum" on the website, which facilitates communication and dialogue.
- Carrying out many youth initiatives in the areas, as serious and productive dialogue depends on moving from change and development at the level of ideas, to change and development at the level of conduct. Such youth initiatives or projects are not objectives in themselves, but rather a means to promote communication and cooperation between the youth on the one hand, and the different

social groups and the local public figures on the other hand, owing to the greatest influence they have on youth ideas and behavior. It is also important to narrow the gap between the young grass roots, the basis of change in society, and decision-makers at the local and national levels. The initiatives undertaken by youth groups are as follows:

The youth initiative in Akkar

The youth in Akkar (Rahbeh, Tikrit and 'Akkar Al-'Atika) organized many orientation seminars for high school students.

As the experiment was successful and the students expressed their desire to benefit from such seminars, the youth group decided to produce an orientation manual for students. After conducting the necessary research, the group produced and distributed the manual to many public and private schools in 'Akkar and in different Lebanese areas. This manual was not a goal in itself, but the dynamism generated during its preparation was more important. Rahbeh, Tikrit and 'Akkar Al-'Atika are neighboring villages, but nearness does not have an impact on youth conditions, while they are very distant from each other as far social relations and dialogue are concerned. This project constituted the first opportunity to those people to meet, exchange ideas and break psychological barriers to some extent.

The youth initiative in the Beka

A youth group is working on the promotion of collective life among the youth, by creating scout associations for girls and boys. After the necessary training in essential skills and techniques, the group attracted children from Ablah and its neighborhood. It prepared scout activities in order to build the culture of dialogue and of accepting “the other”.

This initiative contributed to gathering many children around cultural and educational activities. Consequently, this activity had an impact on the entire area, since children are drawn from different backgrounds. It was an opportunity for the youth to meet around converging issues rather than engage in negativity and submissiveness.

The youth initiative in Hasbayya

In light of the unfavorable conditions in South Lebanon, the initiative was divided in accordance with the participating villages due to difficult movement from one village to another during the July War of 2006 and later on, and due to the prevalence of insecurity among the youth to date.

In Hasbayya, the youth established an environmental association, called The Association for the Salvation of Natural Heritage. This association aims at the conservation of green spaces and of the environmental heritage. It also aims at raising environmental awareness and at undertaking environmental, educational and social activities.

In Khalwat, the youth established a public library, another urgent need to the resident students, due to the scarcity of references.

In Kfeir, the youth established a sports and cultural club which, in coordination with the municipality, organizes some local activities and projects with an educational, cultural, developmental and social character. The different initiatives undertaken by the youth in this potentially volatile region prove their determination and willingness to change.

The youth initiative in Kesrouan

In Chahtoul and its neighborhood, a project for the promotion of rural tourism was launched in cooperation with the municipality.

The project on the empowerment of the Lebanese youth is now drawing to a close, three years after its launch. The main objective of the project is to get the youth to meet, engage in dialogue, and participate in change.

But where do we stand with the achievement of this objective? What role has been played by the youth in the translation of this objective into reality, whereby they play the main role in building the culture of dialogue and accepting “the other”? Are the youth able to persevere despite the surrounding factors?

The difficulties have been enormous, but the youth have coped with them with perseverance. Some of them did not carry on till the end of the project, but others insisted on staying to achieve the objectives by

participating in meetings, researches, seminars, youth initiatives and local projects carried out in their villages with the aim of improving the conditions of their communities in general, and those of the youth in particular.

A large number of those young people are now suffering from frustration and a lack of motivation. Despite all the achievements and the activities involving them, we often face rigid attitudes and cliché ideas. In the meetings and seminars organized during the project, we experienced a great deal of openness to “the other”, as well as a logical and sober dialogue. But unfortunately, amidst all the tension, violence and mobilization, many young people identified with mobilizational speeches and narrow-interest affiliations, contrary to what we had earlier experienced. This tension surfaced particularly last year, i.e. in 2007 and in early 2008.

During the project, the youth participated in many training seminars, and acquired many techniques and skills with the objective of creating communication, exchanging ideas, and accepting “the other”. We formed a national committee of 22 young members from different areas, whose tasks consist of ensuring communication, planning and organizing different meetings that gather the youth with all their differences and conflicts so that they come up together with common grounds and a common language. The national committee was also in charge of conveying youth concerns and interests to decision-makers at the national level. Youth meetings were

very fruitful in terms of interaction and cooperation, and as regards the issues under discussion and their content, and the fulfillment of the required tasks.

This committee was unable to meet regularly as planned earlier due to two basic factors: first, the political tension and crises hitting Lebanon since February 2005 up to the present; and second, the July 2006 War that has left a considerable impact on the youth in all areas.

Despite the difficulties and the external and domestic factors, the youth have persevered in fulfilling the tasks referred to in a file dealing with some youth issues. Unfortunately, communication with decision-makers has been non-existent in the light of the ongoing crises the country is suffering from. As a result, youth hope of introducing change has been seriously undermined, and so has been their motivation due to the lack of authorities and institutions guaranteeing sustainability. The youth have reached a deadlock at the national level in spite of all the attempts to carry on.

Do the youth lack seriousness and commitment to change?

Are decision-makers indifferent to youth concerns and opinions?

Does Lebanese society lack critical thinking or have we become tamed and subjugated?

Some youth groups are carrying on with the fulfillment of their tasks at the local level in the hope of introducing change and developing their environment by empowering and promoting their role, and by influencing

other people in order to achieve the objectives they had set in terms of promoting dialogue and building critical thinking that is desperately needed in our society. Other youth groups disappeared, lost the determination and motivation needed to carry on. The most important question one asks is to what extent violence affects the youth.

The groups which persevered and worked their way through are characterized by openness, objectivity, and accepting “the other”. Many young people rejected narrow affiliations and the status quo, and decided to change as a result. However, most of the youth unfortunately maintained their rigidity and confinement to their narrow affiliations. They do not adopt critical thinking and analysis, but rather demagogic and ideological speeches, and create additional psychological barriers between them and “the other”.

The youth itself is not only associated with age or a life stage, but it



should also be associated with youth characteristics such as dynamism, creativity and a desire to change. The credibility of the youth lies in openness and acceptance of “the other”. What matters the most is constructive criticism based on knowledge, analysis and assessment. Here we should ask ourselves the following question: to what extent can the Lebanese do critical thinking enabling them to distinguish between things and to keep away from subordination and subservience.

The Debate

Dialogue is considered a salient issue in Lebanon as it makes the essence of questions that have always been characterized as burning, whether at the religious, intellectual, or political levels.

The debate was lively and fierce and dealt with three issues: the significance and nature of the dialogue concept, the prerequisites and means needed to hold a successful and sustainable dialogue, and the role of social and state institutions in promoting dialogue.

Regarding the meaning and nature of the dialogue concept, the participants underlined the fact that the dialogue we are trying to engage in should have started 63 years ago and that the basis of every dialogue is sound judgment. They also pointed out to the fact that dialogue is often understood as a discussion in which one party seeks to convince the other party. Nevertheless, dialogue is a long-term process and a means to achieve certain goals with the participation of all parties. The main problem lies in the inability to accept “the other”. The complexity of dialogue results from the conflict between the two parties; therefore the presence of a mediator is indispensable to help ensure the flow of dialogue and its success. In this respect, many participants emphasized the importance of looking for common grounds and for the problems faced by all the youth as a basis to

launch the dialogue process, which is supposed to lead to a win-win situation.

As for the second issue, namely the prerequisites for successful and sustainable dialogue, the participants agreed that all Lebanese youth are encountering the same problems, and suggested that we should start acting and think of creating practical ideas to involve the youth, rather than engaging in useless talk. It should be noted that the rate of organizations to the population size in Lebanon is the highest in the world, which raises a question about the achievements of such organizations!

For this reason, the participants suggested that we should start working with small groups of young people in one field and then carry on in all fields. Some said there should be a move from small projects to one sustainable program for all, and a reconsideration of present strategies, while others pointed out to the role that can be played by the media in this connection.

On the other hand, the participants agreed on the fact that the Lebanese youth are encountering the same problems regarding:

- the meaning of independence and the criteria for freedom whereby we should learn to respect other people's decisions without eliminating them;
- culture and education, including their paradoxes;
- the economic conditions;

- politics, particularly radicalism and exaggeration;
- the loss and collapse of religious faith.

Therefore, in order to attract the youth, we should inevitably emphasize activities, boost their sense of belonging, and create new friendship ties, in addition to working on the development of their personalities to make them feel powerful enough to introduce change wherever the need arises. Some insisted that dialogue should start on the basis of common grounds, such as major problems affecting everybody, while others attached importance on mediation between conflicting parties, since it makes dialogue easier.

As for the third issue, a large number of participants underlined the role of social and state institutions in promoting and sustaining inter-youth dialogue.

Most participants underlined the importance of the role played by social and state institutions in promoting and sustaining inter-youth dialogue.

One of the participants expressed this opinion by saying that the best way to promote youth abilities is to start urging and encouraging them in their families, at schools and colleges, rather than targeting them only in workshops. He highlighted the role of the media in this regard, along with the internet that can be used in awareness programs. Furthermore, the idea of forgiveness should be stressed in order to reach common grounds.

On the other hand, the human development approach should be adopted on the basis that families stop predisposing children to accept submission

and surrender. The government is supposed to play an active role, while organizations should promote projects adapting to realities in youth life, rather than falling under the influence of the funders' instructions. It is also necessary to have a favorable environment.

Work should start with the parents at home, before it is carried on with the youth at school, until a sense of belonging to one's country is inculcated in them.

The participants raised an extremely important question, namely auto-critique. Some indicated that courage lies in the ability to stand in front of the mirror and evaluate oneself. For them, we should not confine ourselves to any field, as we should be able to work in social, political and other fields.

Others recognized the necessity of establishing relationships with other organizations and learning from their experience. Then, we can benefit from a real network integrated with ministries, social organizations and others in order to ultimately reach the youth.

It is extremely important to become acquainted with "the other", because it is impossible to eliminate our faulty culture and traditions which are behind our prejudices unless we face them and become acquainted with them. It is worth mentioning that we are still unable to do the work we aspire to; therefore, we should believe that our country is built on differences, hence the need to regard such differences as a treasure, not a problem.

At the end of the debate, Mr. Safa and Mr. Abi Yazbek commented on all that was said.

Mr Safa put forward the following eight suggestions that need to be taken into consideration regarding the promotion of dialogue:

- 1- The need to make sound judgment and right decisions.
- 2- Distinguishing between dialogue and competition.
- 3- Bringing the youth together through activities, not the activity itself, causes change.
- 4- Urging the media to develop educational programs contributing to the promotion of effective dialogue.
- 5- Increased organization involvement.
- 6- Not restricting the task of teaching dialogue principles and training in dialogue to schools.
- 7- Making dialogue aim discovering, accepting and forgiving “the other”.
- 8- Making dialogue one of the bases when dealing with some complex issues.

Mr Abi Yazbek commented by saying that the youth constitute an extremely important element in all societies. However, if the youth were to become active members in their societies, an effective dialogue should be established. This dialogue should start at home, with their own families, and then continue throughout their school years and within specific

organizations or sectors they join. We should attempt to boost their self-esteem while trying to eliminate the feeling of powerlessness that characterizes them in times of conflict and war.

As a result, each one of us has to play one's role perfectly, starting at home and then including schools, organizations, the media, and finally the government.

At the end, Mr. Abi Yazbek said that we should all provide the youth with the essential tools enabling them to become decision-makers while guiding their paths to make them reach the desired goals. They should not forget the importance of maintaining their activities and the ways to translate their valuable ideas into beneficial actions whose impact will be felt by the future generations.





**Round
Table** 3

**Is the Drug Addict in Conflict with
the Law or In Need of Treatment?**

May 6, 2008

The Addict between Illness and Crime Jean Oghassabian*

Honorable Assembly,

The topic of this roundtable poses the paradox of the drug addict: Is he/she in violation of the law or in need of treatment?

Addiction is caused by many factors including the family, society, psychological problems, the environment, or the political conditions. Addiction transforms drug addicts into marginalized people and endangers their mental, psychological and physical health. They are often unemployed and unproductive. Their need of drugs may transform them into criminals, violent people, or even drug dealers; therefore, are drug addicts criminals or ill people?



Relevant Lebanese laws place drug addiction in a grey area between illness and crime, and provide an opportunity to treat drug addicts rather than imprisoning them immediately. However, a gap is caused by the lack of sufficient rehabilitation, treatment and follow-up centers. Filling this gap is the only way allowing drug addicts to receive treatment, rather than being sent to conventional jails, along with criminals, thieves and drug dealers, thus giving them another reason to increase addiction. I believe this is a pivotal issue that will be tackled in the two sessions of this

* Minister of State for Administrative Reform from 19/7/2005 till 11/7/2008

roundtable dialogue.

In this regard, I would like to laud the special role played by NGOs in contributing to the treatment of drug addicts. We need more specialized associations, and we need to set up more special centers to treat this blight.

It is worth mentioning that since the end of the 1990s, the Lebanese government has exerted considerable efforts to suppress drug production and trafficking. Here lies the responsibility of the security services in charge of fighting against all kinds of drugs, prosecuting drug dealers, and punishing drug traffickers. It is their duty to eliminate favorable conditions facilitating access to drugs, trafficking, and making fortunes as a result.

Addiction is a serious blight whose adverse consequences not only affect drug addicts, but also their families, environment and society in general. This dialogue assembly will shed light on ways to deal wisely with drug addicts, so that they come off addiction and become productive members in society. This mission rests on collective responsibility, starting with the family and moving to civil society associations, governmental authorities, and security services.

I would like to thank the European Union for supporting The Afkar II Program, which allows The Ministry of State for Administrative Reform (OMSAR) to address these key issues and leave a positive impact on Lebanese society.

I hope that this roundtable will come up with practical results and recommendations constituting a basis for the promotion of the fight against drugs and for the treatment of drug addiction in Lebanon.

Policies Pursued in the Fight against Drugs

Mr. Jussi Närvi*

Your Excellency,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The question which we are to discuss here today – What kind of drug policies should we have? – has been at the heart of a debate at the European Union for a long time, and especially so in the last ten years. The issue is so important that we have established a specialized agency, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, to serve as the central source of information and as a catalyst of new policies. Today, the EU drug-related public expenditures amount to some 36 billion Euro. Thus, it has become a major donor to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and invests further 750 million Euro on demand and supply reduction measures in neighboring and producing countries. While there are still considerable differences among individual European countries regarding both the scale of and the response to the drug problem, there is a general trend to move away from criminal justice responses towards reduction in



* *Representative of the European Commission in Beirut*

demand, prevention, treatment, and social rehabilitation activities.

The year 2008 will be very important for us: we will, together with the rest of the international community, evaluate the progress we have made with respect to the goals set in the 1998 special United Nations session on combating the world drug problem.

But as I am not an expert on the issue of drug addiction, allow me to steer away from this topic and seize this opportunity to address you in your more general roles, as representatives of Lebanese civil society. To see such a large number of NGO representatives coming to the Grand Sérail at the invitation of a minister looks very encouraging to me.

In 2004, when we launched Afkar - our first program for the support of Lebanese civil society - we were well aware that direct cooperation between the public sector and NGOs is not always an easy one, and certainly not widely practiced in Lebanon. Many were so pessimistic that they told us that civil society organizations and the government will never trust each other enough to work so closely together. I am happy to state that experience has proven them wrong. Throughout the program we have seen a number of ministries, the ISF, and the General Security, all opening their doors to NGOs, cooperating on drafting laws and policies, organizing staff training, and jointly designing and running awareness campaigns.

I believe that we are witnessing a shift in the political climate towards more trust and recognition of the role of civil society organizations. And

while I do not claim that it was Afkar alone which has brought about this change, I hope that Afkar has been one of the major contributors.

The winners will in the end be on all sides: the government will respond better to the aspirations of its electorate and thus boost its own legitimacy, civil society organizations will gain credibility, and the citizens will get the opportunity to be heard and to campaign for noble causes.

However, given our own European experience, we would like to see the scope of civil society participation in Lebanon to broaden much further, not only in terms of the narrow focus on politics, but also to involve political participation and dialogue.

This is especially true now, when the Lebanese political context is indeed vulnerable. I have heard many NGO complaints that ‘nothing’ is happening, that the political deadlock jeopardizes their work, and that they are discouraged by the obstacles created by the political stalemate. Even in the context of Afkar, we have seen projects being re-designed and events cancelled because of political instability.

But I insist that now is the time to get and stay involved, to ask the ruling class with a firm and clear voice to provide cures for the country ailments, and to act as a bridge and a ‘hot-line’ between people and politicians.

Civil society organizations have proven to be actually one of the most stable features on the Lebanese scene. They worked throughout the civil war and have been entrusted with providing some of the very basic

services. Although not always impartial and not necessarily independent, civil society organizations have always been very present. I, therefore, believe that their concerted and remarkable efforts could play a major role in breaking the political deadlock, in steering Lebanese politics away from personalities toward programs, and fundamentally in preventing a potential conflict.

I am confident that by hosting events such as today's NGO roundtable – and I thank Minister Oghassabian for taking this initiative – we are moving in the right direction, towards increased civil society participation. I urge you not to be easily satisfied and to take on the next challenge of increased political responsibility.

Thank you and I wish you an afternoon of fruitful discussions.



Developing the Bases of Dealing with Drug Addicts

No to Increased Marginalization or Segregation

Elie Al-A'raj*

The world has known narcotics since its creation, and modern Lebanon has known drug production and use for over two centuries. In time, the concept of dealing with the issue of addiction has developed and aroused controversies and even contradiction. The issue has evolved from the social use of drugs to criminalization and to binding governments, by the sole agreement and its annexes, to take care of addicts and consider them as patients, and finally to the legalization of some types of drugs in a number of Western countries. Some strategies and laws have been created to cover all aspects of the drug paradox including culture, trafficking, facilitation, promotion and use of drugs, with the aim of regulating the framework of production and use in an attempt to restrict them to medical and scientific uses.

The supply-limiting strategy serves to coordinate and organize the arrest process, develop the skills of policemen and train them in using means to fight against drugs in order to limit its cultivation, destroy unlicensed plants



* *Director, Soins Infirmiers, Développement Communautaire (SIDC).*

and smuggled substances, prosecute cultivators, suppress trafficking, smuggling, drug promotion, and arrest and prosecute drug users.

The demand-limiting strategy, which emerged from the spirit of the sole agreement, recommends working on prevention at three levels. The starting point has to do with raising awareness and providing the necessary means of prevention to protect society from drug use by introducing a wide array of activities targeting the youth in particular. Thus, they are encouraged to fill their free time, acquire knowledge, develop a sense of commitment, and adopt a healthy conduct including sports and cultural activities that should be available to all social strata. This strategy also recommends the adoption of a plan for sustainable development, the provision of support to cultivators in the form of alternative crops, land reclamation, provision of the necessary irrigation systems, the improvement of their standard of living, and the provision of the necessary services, particularly in rural societies.

On the other hand, the demand-limiting strategy on drugs addresses drug users so that they receive care and orientation, as well as assistance to make their own decisions about drug abstinence. It also devotes particular attention to addicts regarding the provision of the necessary treatment and rehabilitation so that they can be reintegrated in society and in the job market.

In the mid-1980s, with the spread of AIDS by injection among drug

users, and with the progress of scientific research towards a broader and deeper concept of addiction and of the addict's reality, a new strategy was devised under the name of limiting the risks of drug use.

This strategy asserts that addiction is an illness and that it is necessary to protect patients, respect them and their choices, and deal with them to help them develop a sense of responsibility. It suggests many programs that can be incorporated in the prevention and care programs for addicts, such as the programs of injection exchange to prevent its sharing by addicts, alternative treatment as one of the adopted methods in the treatment of addiction, and consequently the abstention from using drugs, with the objective of shifting addicts from the use of injections to orally administered medicine. Other suggestions include addict-friendly centers, preventive measures in the streets, the provision of condoms and of voluntary, confidential and free tests, and the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and the hepatitis virus.

Although this strategy has not been officially adopted in Lebanon yet, NGOs started implementing some of its



programs. Over eight years ago the SIDC launched the action program in the streets targeting the most vulnerable groups, such as drug users by injection. The program was carried out in cooperation with the National AIDS Control Program in Lebanon and NGOs, and it involves raising awareness, providing orientation and advice, in addition to providing preventive methods to these groups in meetings held at their places, and by establishing trust relationships with educated people who are mostly their companions.

The Skoun Association also launched the alternative treatment program many years ago. The continuity of the first program and the perseverance of the second have enabled us to discuss new strategies and to reconsider the laws. His Excellency the Minister of Health has recently issued a decree sanctioning alternative treatments. The enforcement mechanisms are currently being established in such a way that the addicts' health and public safety are preserved.

In the same vein, Law no. 673/98 on Narcotics, Sulfa Drugs and Stupefacients was enacted. At the time, civil society organizations played an important role in the discussion of its articles, the suggestion of some amendments, the conduct of advocacy and support activities in contacts established with MPs, the Ministry of Justice and legislators. This law is considered modern in that it regards addicts as patients, and suspends legal action if they decide to go for treatment while preserving their right to

confidentiality and free treatment. Although the law needs revision a decade following its enactment, the enforcement regulations have not been issued yet. Consequently, addicts hesitate in many cases to go for treatment because of high detoxification costs, and for fear of legal action once their case is disclosed. In many cases matters are left to the discretion of the judge, but on the other hand, regulatory standards must inevitably be formulated for rehabilitation centers to improve and diversify the methods of treatment and rehabilitation.

The issue of addiction is two-fold: the first aspect is judicial whereas the second relates to public health, which leads us to consider the following facts:

- 1- No country has been able to eradicate drugs in terms of cultivation, smuggling, trafficking, or use, no matter how strict its laws are, how strict its police authorities are, or how religiously, socially or ideologically conservative it is. In the case of Lebanon, we all know that despite great efforts made by policemen, we are still a country which produces drugs even in small quantities, and we are still a country of transit.
- 2- Methods of oppression and intimidation adopted to force addicts to stop using drugs have not brought about positive results. If we carefully examine the conditions and practices of young people,

we see that drugs of all types are available to this segment of the population. The rate of drug use is continuously increasing while there is remarkable lowering in the age of drug users.

This is translated into the simplistic perception of risks involved in drug use and in a wider acceptance by the youth of the concept of addiction as well as their ignorance of the risks. I am not only referring to prohibited drugs but also to some medicine, narcotics, sulfa drugs, and stupeficient that can be purchased without medical prescription and at low prices.

- 3- The rural development project for the production of alternative crops in the Beka' and other areas launched in the early 1990s failed because Lebanon was not ready to implement it on the one hand, and because the donors did not fulfill their commitment to offer the required assistance on the other hand.
- 4- Although Lebanon ratified all the relevant international agreements, it cannot tackle the problem of addiction from the security perspective only, leaving to civil society institutions and some private initiatives the promotion of development and the care of addicts and to some private initiatives the development of rural cultivation. Despite the number of achievements in rural areas regarding the provision of services to the inhabitants, such

as medical care and education, they remain mediocre, considering the size of needs.

5- Addiction is a chronic disease; however, we are still sentencing patients to imprisonment although the law sanctions other means to deal with this issue, hence our call for their implementation and for the allocation of the required budgets. Addicts are human beings and citizens who deserve to live in dignity. It is our duty to protect them by keeping pace with the recent scientific approaches such as the adoption of the stipulations of the risk limitation strategy. The number of drug addicts with AIDS is still low but there are indicators, known by professionals in the field, suggesting an increase of rates. Should we wait until we face the same problems faced in some friendly and sister countries like Iran and Libya where AIDS has spread among addicts in an intractable manner, to start taking the necessary steps?

While we present to you this rather bitter reality, we highly value the role played by the European Union and the Ministry for Administrative Reform in supporting development projects carried out by NGOs and civil society institutions. We hope this seminar will contribute to opening up new horizons that help accelerate the development of principles on dealing

with addicts. Laws and regulations are created to protect the vulnerable, safeguard their rights and develop society, rather than increase their marginalization and segregation.

The Oum el-Nour Gathering

It was established in 1989 with the aim of rescuing humans from the addiction blight and creating a healthy society by promoting treatment and preventive programs at the same time.



Treatment

Treatment in Oum el-Nour is administered in a series including the reception program, the rehabilitation program, the follow-up program and the parents' program.

- The treatment program provides individual and family advice, an evaluation of the medical, psychological and social background of each help seeker, counseling or referral to the rehabilitation center after the completion of the physical weaning in hospital. This is done in meetings in which privacy and confidentiality are respected, and through follow-up in hospital and in prison.
- The rehabilitation program provides in its four phases extended over 12 to 15 months, an integral treatment approach that does not only help individuals to come off drugs, but also improves their ability to resume

* *Director of the Rehabilitation Center of Oum el Nour*

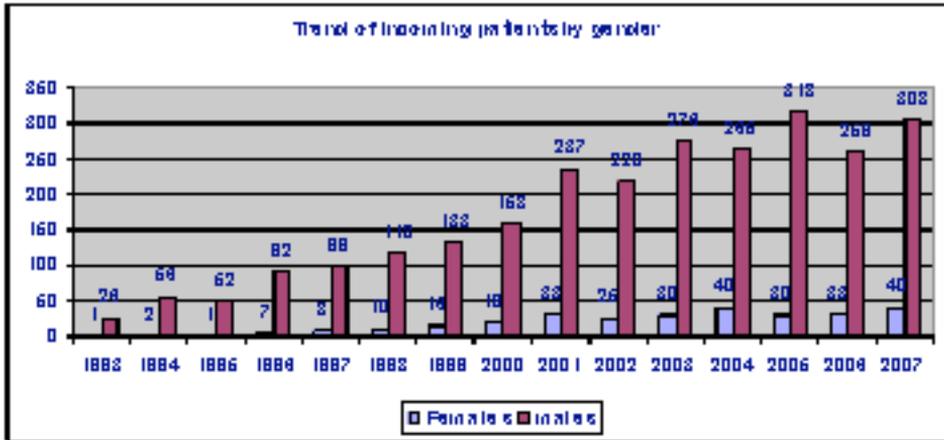
their activities, softens the medical and social impacts of addiction on them. The program provides addicts with psychological and social support, in-group treatment, individual follow-up, assistance to gradually integrate in society, in addition to other constructive activities contributing to the recovery process.

- The follow-up program: since recovery from addiction takes a long time, the follow-up program promotes social integration, prevents relapses by creating expression groups, and by organizing motivation exercises and individual and family meetings.
- The parents' program addresses the family during the addicts' stay at the rehabilitation center. It aims at rebuilding family and social ties, offering advice and support to family members by clarifying the problem, explaining the approach adopted to overcome difficulties, and sharing experience with families in support groups and during visits to the center.

Facts on addiction

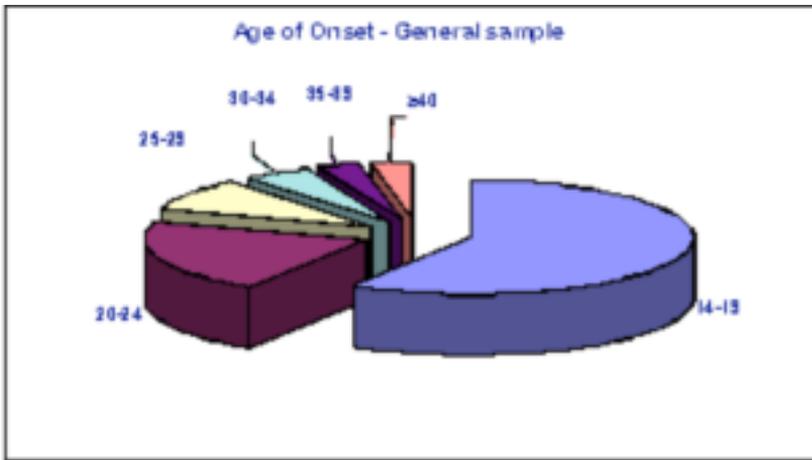
According to the statistics produced by the Oum el-Nour Gathering in 2007, we have witnessed over the past few years changes in the conditions of addiction as follows:

- An increase in the number of drug addicts year after year



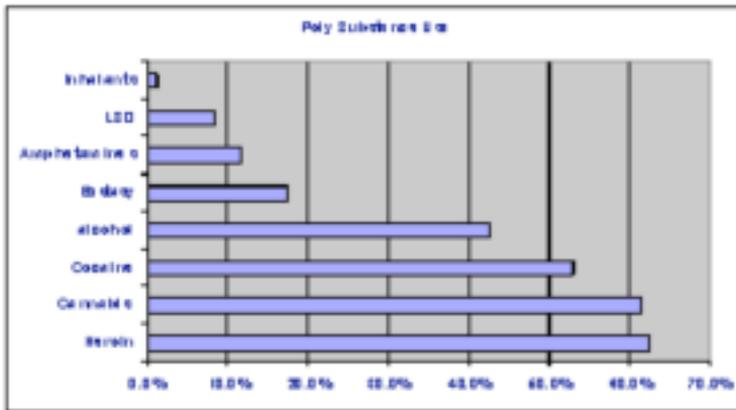
This increase may be attributed to two reasons: first, the increase in the number of drug users in Lebanon, and second, the early detection and the request for assistance, thanks to the awareness of the problem.

- Lower onset age for teenagers (Oum el-Nour statistics, 2007)

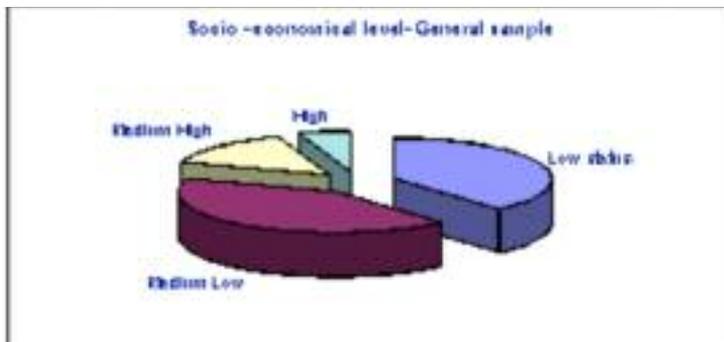


Against an increase in the number of addicts, we see a lower onset age for teenagers by 60%

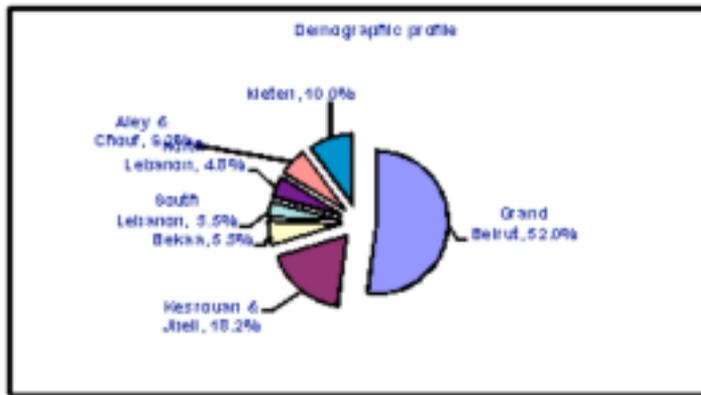
- The multiplicity and diversity of used substances



- The problem of drug use is targeting different social groups, particularly the middle class and low income people



- The distribution of drug substances use in all Lebanese areas



Needs

The facts on addiction present many challenges that compel us to meet the following needs:

- The diversification of services and programs to meet the different needs of addicts.
- The determination and control of the quality of services provided to face this blight at the national level.
- The determination of cooperation and coordination mechanisms among the different parties concerned with the issue of addiction.

Therefore, we suggest the activation of the Committee for the Fight against Drug Addiction provided for in Article 199 of Drug Law no. 673

so that such needs are met and the challenges are faced by developing national policies and enforcement mechanisms.



The Role of the Police in Checking the Use of Drugs A Judicial Opinion Brigadier General Michel Chaccour*

We are striving, through awareness programs on the dangers of drugs, to encourage drug addicts to voluntarily seek treatment before they are arrested or legal action is taken against them. The role of the Office for the Fight against Drugs in the field is three-fold:



- the reduction of supply
- the reduction of demand
- the treatment of addicts

The cases in which drug users are summoned or received:

- occasional arrest for suspicion of drug use (checkpoints, home search, public places)
- arrest and catching red-handed
- arrest on the basis of confession
- arrest on the basis of the concerned person's confession
- arrest on the basis of laboratory urine tests

* *Head of the Public Criminal Investigation Department.*

- summons on the basis of information or notification
- summons at the request of parents or relatives
- voluntary appearance before the drugs office
- referring the person arrested by another department on the basis of the public prosecutor's memo

The use of drugs is a crime punishable by the law. It carries a penalty of imprisonment ranging from three months to three years, and a two to five million Lebanese pound fine.

On the other hand, are there written or unwritten agreements between the drug office and the public prosecutor on the principle of prosecution in crimes of drug use?

- In fact, there are no written agreements between the drug office and the public prosecutor, but the law governs this relationship.
- The judicial police act upon a memo of the public prosecutor, both appellate and cassation.

After the drug user is heard at the drug office, the consulted competent public prosecutor takes the decision with the following options:

- release
- keeping them under investigation
- release upon a pledge to join a rehabilitation center

- release upon the presentation of the deeds of the house
- arrest and referral to the competent public prosecutor, considering that a committee for addiction and rehabilitation centers affiliated to the state is non-existent
- release upon a pledge to keep undergoing treatment
- referral to the investigating magistrate
- issuing an arrest warrant in their presence
- imprisonment

A distinction should be made between two cases: addiction and the occasional use of drugs.

The case of addiction

Addicts are every person using a drug substance permanently, becoming hooked to it and depending on it physically, psychologically, or both.

The case of occasional use of drugs

Occasional use is the use of a drug substance from time to time without being hooked to it, hence no dependence, be it physical or psychological.

As for the law:

- It allows for severe penalty in case of relapse.
- It considers addicts as patients in need of treatment.
- Addicts are given the opportunity to receive treatment on their own

initiative without being liable to legal action.

Article 127 of the Drug Law no. 673 dated 16/3/1998 stipulates that:

- every person who acquires or buys a small amount for drug use shall be punished by imprisonment from three months to three years and by having to pay a fine ranging from two millions to five millions Lebanese pounds; and
- the same penalty is imposed on whoever is proven to be an addict and does not receive treatment.

It is worth mentioning that addicts shall not be punished if they voluntarily appear before the Committee for the Fight against Drug Addiction to ask for physical and psychological treatment, and undergo full treatment until they get a certificate establishing total recovery.

If addicts discontinue the treatment before getting the certificate, they shall be duly subject to legal action.

The law provides for the compulsory treatment of addicts upon the request of the parents, the guardian, the custodian or the spouse, in case the addict is a minor son/daughter or a spouse.

The committee on addiction has the power to respond to or reject such requests.

The Public Prosecutor has the right, after conducting investigation into the addicts' conditions, to refer them to the committee to compel them to

undergo treatment, if deemed necessary, before deciding about legal action.

Addicts are entitled to ask for treatment during investigation and trial. The competent judicial authorities decide to terminate the procedures and refer them to the Committee for the Fight against Drug Addiction that will send them to hospital to undergo treatment.

Tracking them is terminated in case their recovery is established according to reports issued by the hospital administration and by the psychiatrist. However, if they suspend treatment, they are referred to the judicial authorities whereby legal action is resumed at the point where investigation stopped.

Proving the use of drugs during investigation occurs either when addicts acknowledge it, or when a urine test is done with the consent of the addicts under investigation.

In case addicts face a crisis during investigation, a doctor's assistance is sought (the Security Forces physician) to administer the necessary treatment and sometimes to transfer them to hospital.

From the legal perspective, there is no distinction between an addict and another in terms of their own or their parents' financial status.

Regarding the treatment cost, some addicts cannot afford it and consequently, they are unable to pay for it in private hospitals, contrary to addicts whose financial status and their parents' make treatment feasible.

After addicts are referred either to the judicial authorities or to a care center, we can follow them up on a personal basis, not according to the

legal procedure.

Close cooperation is established between us and the parents with the aim of freeing addicts from the use of drugs and of urging them to undergo treatment.

I don't see any obstacles hindering law enforcement, but there is a need to take some decisions and to issue decrees that facilitate the enforcement of Drug Law no. 673 dated 16/3/1998. Thus, we will have created the proper bodies concerned with fighting drug crimes, treating addicts and following them up, while emphasizing that the establishment of one committee, with the exclusion of the others, will not bring about the desired results.



The Drug Addict Oscillates between Being a “Criminal” and a “Victim” Ziad Mekanna*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to extend my thanks to His Excellency the Minister of State for Administrative Reform, to the Afkar II staff and to the Émergences Foundation for organizing this dialogue assembly that deals with one of the most salient social issues, especially that the need to address it has become urgent and bears neither argument nor delay.

The paradox of this issue transcends the technical legal framework to encompass concepts and convictions that have prevailed in societies for a long time and have constituted the foundation of positive law in this regard, thus reflecting such concepts and convictions. In police states where citizens are not valued, laws deal with drug users as criminals regardless of the conditions that led them to addiction. The state often considers that it should impose severe penalty on law violators to maintain public order. If drug users live in a civilized society that treats individuals as a human value, its laws are drafted as answers to different questions such as: Why does the addict use drugs? What damage results from addiction? What are the benefits of imprisoning addicts? How can the funds spent as



* *District Judge at the Court of Appeal of Beirut*

imprisonment fees be channeled to projects bringing about treatment rather than punishment? These and similar questions falling in the same category prompt lawyers, judges, social workers and psychiatrics to treat addicts humanely, to regard them as patients without a will, owing to their immersion in addiction, and in need of treatment rather than punishment.

Lebanese legislators have undoubtedly sought upon the ratification of the Law on Narcotics, Sulfa Drugs and Stupefacients no. 673/98, to treat drug users differently from other law violators. But to what extent does this distinction apply? And what is the ceiling? In other word, are drug users in Lebanon still considered as criminals after the ratification of this law? Or have they been shifted from the crime category to the patient category?

To answer this pivotal question, we will deal with the provisions of the said law to examine its characteristics, the developments it has brought about, as well as the institutions and procedures it has established. We also need to explore reality to identify the degree of law enforcement, as laws are evaluated according to the fulfillment of objectives set upon their endorsement.

On the criminalization of drug use

Article 127 of Drug Law no. 673/98 provides that whoever holds, acquires or buys a small amount of a very dangerous substance without medical prescription and with the intention of using it, shall incur a penalty of imprisonment ranging from three months to three years, and a two to five

million Lebanese pound fine. The same also applies to addicts to this substance if they do not follow the treatment procedure. Article 130 of the same law provides that whoever holds, acquires or buys a small amount of a dangerous substance without medical prescription and with the intention of using it, shall incur a penalty of imprisonment ranging from two months to two years, and a one to three million Lebanese pound fine. The same also applies to addicts to this substance if they do not follow the treatment procedure.

Both texts clearly indicate that the law considers drug addiction a crime and shall punish whoever commits this crime. The specified penalty for the use of very dangerous substances reaches, as a ceiling, the highest level of a misdemeanor penalty. The penalty for addiction to dangerous substances is also relatively severe owing to the two-year imprisonment. It is worth mentioning in this regard that the law criminalizes drug use before specifying treatment and care procedures. Therefore, the idea of criminalization is a principle, but the law does not overlook the outcome of treatment. In this connection, drug addicts receive special handling, whereby receiving treatment might affect the outcome of legal action. This might induce them to undergo treatment in order to avoid punishment. In effect, the law provides in Chapter 2 that the treatment and care procedures fall under “fighting drug addiction”. Such procedures are adopted either voluntarily before legal action, or compulsorily, or during investigation and trial. The treatment method is dealt with in the following part.

Seeking treatment before trial

According to Article 183 of the Drug Law, drug addicts are allowed before prosecution to appear before the Committee for the Fight against Drug Addiction to request physical and psychological treatment for “the illness of addiction”. In such a case, they are entitled to conceal their identity except to people maintaining professional confidentiality, and they are also entitled “not to be subject to legal action” if they undergo full treatment until they get a certificate establishing their total recovery. The committee is formed, according to a decision of the minister of justice, of a judge as chair, a representative of the Ministry of Social Affairs, a doctor representing the Ministry of Public Health, a representative of the Central Directorate for the Fight against Drugs, a representative of the competent institutions interested in drugs matters, and members suggested by the competent department.

This clause gives addicts the opportunity to willingly seek treatment, and provides the means to that end. Subsequent clauses regulate treatment procedures in specialized hospitals under the supervision of social workers. It should be noted that “the addiction illness” is expressly stated, and that in Articles 187 and 188, the addict is called “patient”. What matters in this respect is that the outcome of undergoing treatment is manifested in the addicts’ entitlement not to be subject to legal action. Such entitlement precludes holding a common right hearing against addicts although their acts are described as criminal. In case recovery is established, they are

definitely exempted from legal action, according to Article 189. If they suspend treatment before getting the recovery certificate, they shall be duly subject to legal action. No doubt, the aforementioned articles clearly show the legislator's intention to deal with drug addicts as patients who need treatment, to encourage them to voluntarily seek treatment by entitling them to immunity from prosecution during the treatment period, and by definitively exempting them from legal action in case of recovery.

A study conducted by The Oum el-Nour Gathering confirms that addicts rarely seek treatment on their own initiative. This indicates the lack of awareness by addicts, most of whom certainly ignore what they are entitled to do in this regard, as it indicates their hesitation to seek treatment due to their expectation of complex procedures they will have to follow.

Therefore, it is necessary to raise awareness in society of the treatment issue and convince addicts of the easy access to treatment, its definite success and positive impact on their well-being, and their immunity from prosecution and punishment.

Compulsory treatment

Article 191 of the law gives the right to the parents, the guardian, the custodian and either of the spouses to ask the Committee for the Fight against Drug Addiction to send the minor, son/daughter of whom they have custody, or the spouse addicted to drugs to hospital for treatment. Article 192 entitles anyone learning about people posing risks to others due to their

addiction to drugs, to notify the Public Prosecutor who shall conduct investigations into this issue and refer addicts to the Committee for the Fight against Drug Addiction to compel them to undergo treatment before taking a decision about legal action.

The stipulations formulated by legislators show the importance accorded to the treatment of addicts who do not voluntarily ask for treatment. The stipulations entitle the parents to ask for treatment as they entitle whoever knows about the risk posed by addicts to notify the Public Prosecutor. But in reality, the parents do not notify the authorities about addiction, because they lack awareness and do not wish to disclose a family issue. Therefore, the submission of the addict to compulsory treatment is closer to theory than it is to reality.

Treatment during investigation and trial

The Public Prosecutor shall refer a person arrested for drug use, with his/her consent, to the Committee for the Fight against Addiction to undergo treatment (Article 193). Addicts are entitled to ask for treatment during investigation and trial. The judicial authorities shall decide to terminate the procedures and to refer them to the Committee for the Fight against Addiction to proceed with the treatment (Article 194).

The unavailability of rooms in institutions and hospitals hinders access to treatment during investigation and trial. The judicial authorities should make sure, every time a new case is presented, if it is possible to send the

defendant to institutions providing treatment. This reality has compelled the judicial authorities, in accordance with the spirit of the Drug Law, to resort to practical means to provide treatment and to protect defendants from the harm resulting from imprisonment and communication with criminals and drug dealers. If defendants wish to receive treatment while sending them to an institution is impossible, and if the parents have a good reputation and pledge to monitor and treat them, they can be released on the basis of this pledge, on condition of supplying the court by the defendants of laboratory reports proving their coming off addiction.

Defendants may also be released upon their demand, if they pledge to come off drug use and if they were not previously convicted. In this case, defendants are asked to submit regular reports ascertaining their fulfillment of the pledge. Procedures shall be postponed until it can be assumed that the defendant has effectively come off drug use.

Even if these practical measures offer alternatives in the provision of treatment in accordance with the law, they fall short of producing the desired result. The treatment of drug addicts is not only limited to the elimination of drug effects on the addict's body, but also requires rehabilitation at the psychological and social levels, thus paving the way for their reintegration in society without risking relapse. This can only be ensured by specialized hospitals. Moreover, regarding the result of the treatment according to the provisions of the law, Article 195 states that in case addicts undergo treatment and get certificates establishing their

recovery on the basis of reports issued by the hospital administration and by the psychiatrist, this shall be communicated to the judicial authorities that take the decision to stop tracking them definitively. This end cannot be reached in the case of addicts not having the opportunity to undergo hospital treatment, because coming off drug use is not in itself a reason to terminate tracking, though it could be a reason to stop penalty enforcement or to grant them extenuating circumstances. The suspension is conditional upon getting a recovery certificate on the basis of reports issued by the hospital administration and by the psychiatrist as mentioned above. Therefore, it is important to give a chance to every addict willing to undergo treatment, to encourage them to follow this path and spare them the outcome of their condemnation. This is compelled by the spirit of the law which does not discard the option of treatment even after conviction and sentence. According to Article 198, addicts are entitled during penalty enforcement to ask for treatment, in which case, the treatment duration is deducted from the sentence duration if they undergo treatment till they recover. This clearly indicates that addict treatment is the desired objective and its fulfillment should remain possible regardless of the procedures, even after they come to an end and penalty enforcement starts.

An examination of the Drug Law, its human and social dimensions regarding the treatment of addicts, cannot but create distress because a decade following the ratification of this law, and by the testimony of the staff in treatment and care institutions, it has not achieved the desired results

due to the lack of proper conditions allowing for proper enforcement. The judicial authorities are confused every time a drug addict file is referred to them. Should they keep addicts detained in prison with thieves and drug dealers so that they are later released in worse conditions? Or should they release them without making treatment a condition, in which case they resume taking drugs right after their release? Or should they wait for the parents to find a vacant room in any care center where addicts can receive treatment, at a time this room should be already available so that the court can immediately take a decision to send addicts to such places, thus sparing them and their parents the burden of finding a care center? The Drug Law compels the state to provide for such centers and to cover the expenses. Unfortunately, it should be admitted that the difficulty in providing treatment opportunities seriously undermines the content of the Drug Law with respect to treatment and care.

Is the drug addict a person in violation of the law?

Certainly he/she is not, because even if the law considers their act as a crime, it deals with them as patients and exempts them from legal action and conviction in case they undergo treatment. However, the treatment path is hard due to the lack of treatment methods, which hinders law enforcement; therefore, addicts find themselves in conflict with the lack of opportunities for law enforcement, and not in conflict with the law itself.

Is the drug addict a person in need of treatment?

Certainly he/she is. Drug addicts even need to be provided with treatment methods. The more they are available, the greater their willingness and courage to face the blight. And the more they see treatment as an unreachable objective, the more they keep away from it and surrender to this blight.

Consequently, the Drug Law, particularly in connection with the treatment of addicts, should be enforced. There is a need to find the necessary means that make it a reality, not mere technical texts, a reality that convinces drug addicts that, if they seek to adopt it, they will be provided with care by the state apparatuses and by the relevant institutions having all the means to successfully accomplish their mission. This reality gives the chance to addicts who are “criminals” and “victims” at the same time to be acquitted of the outcome of their criminal acts, and to make up for the pain suffered during the addiction period by them and by their parents.

We hope that these objectives will be fulfilled one day.

The Debate

Is the drug addicts in conflict with the law or in need of treatment?

This paradox raises many important issues that go beyond the legal framework and expresses concepts and beliefs that take root in society and constitute the basis for positive law on drug addicts.

The participants put forward many suggestions laying the foundation of a global picture that might help us understand the deepest roots of the problem and the way to tackle it. They stressed the importance of concentrating efforts on taking the necessary precautions and on filling the free time of the youth, one of the main causes of addiction. Furthermore, they referred to the need to reduce the stock of drugs by restricting their cultivation to medical ends.

It is worth mentioning that awareness plays a vital role in this regard, for the influence it has at all levels, including the prevention of taking sedatives, particularly by students. The Ministry of Health also plays a role in prohibiting the sale of these pills without prescriptions by specialized doctors. The participants referred to the awareness of pharmacists since they often sell such pills without medical prescriptions.

They pointed out the need to tackle the issue of developing social awareness on how to deal with drug addicts following their treatment and

reintegration in society.

The participants agreed that it is important to coordinate and join efforts in order to achieve positive results. Regarding this issue, the ideas expressed by the participants can be summed up by the need to join NGO efforts, especially during the rehabilitation period that follows treatment. Rehabilitation, which includes physical, social and psychological aspects, is considered more important than the treatment itself.

At the end, Mr. Whaibe concluded the debate by raising two questions that opened up new horizons for additional debate and thought: What is the definition of recovery? What does recovery mean to a drug addict?



**The Status of Volunteers in the
Organizational Hierarchies of NGOs
July 25, 2008**

Eliminating Discrimination from Volunteer Work Ibrahim Chamseddine*

In the welcoming speech he made on the occasion of holding Roundtable IV, the Minister of State for Administrative Reform his Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Chamseddine highlighted the following points:

- The state represents the noblest expression of civil society, as it is a civil institution that people agree about as a service provider in a framework defined by the constitution and the law.
- In the case of Lebanon, there is an obvious and perhaps chronic absence of state control.
- When the state power declines, observing the law becomes a sort of volunteer work. Then, volunteerism becomes one of the most



* *The Minister of State for Administrative Reform*

important social bonds and contributes to the preservation of the idea of the state.

- Volunteerism, as the opposite of compulsion, is one of the greatest virtues and involves doing work we choose to do.
- Volunteer work should be kept away from all sorts of religious, regional, and racial discrimination.
- It is the opposite of isolation, and as such, volunteers should be open-minded and unconditionally communicative. Volunteerism necessitates cooperation and communication with another person or group.
- In Western societies, volunteerism is organized in contrast with existing individualistic inclinations, while in Lebanon it has cultural foundations including the family, the neighbors and society at large, but it lacks organization.
- As a minister, I am ready to be a volunteer, along with you, in any task serving public interest, at the levels of training and work.

Volunteerism can be defined as any type of work willingly done by a person “for free” to express their intention to influence their close or remote milieu. There is a need to establish a link between volunteerism as a direct implementation and the moral values that motivate the individual to do this act. We cannot simplistically consider every “free” act as a volunteering act causing change; therefore, it is always necessary to focus on the values constituting the background of volunteer work. Such values involve the rejection of oppression caused by poverty, deprivation, marginalization, discrimination and others. They also improve the quality of the volunteers’ work and provide them with an appropriate moral framework to step in. Voluntary work can be done on the basis of individual initiatives and can be organized in formal or informal networks with the aim of achieving common goals.

As a civilizational and ethical value based on social justice and human rights, volunteer work is influenced by the realities of different societies, especially that it is often linked to the concepts of citizenship and civil liability. Lebanese society is considered one of the most socially and politically active among Arab societies, in addition to enjoying a measure of individual and public freedoms that distinguish it in contrast with neighboring countries. However, this characteristic has not always been

* *Former officer in the Volunteerism Program, the Social Movement.*

accompanied by political, economic, and social stability. Such instability has always and at different stages put citizens under pressure, thereby restricting their activities and efficiency as partners in many areas of public life. It has compelled individuals to involuntarily or voluntarily limit the range of their participation in furthering public interests, and to give precedence to their narrow affiliations including their areas, religious communities, political parties, and families.

These factors have all together negatively affected the spread of the concepts and values of volunteerism among individuals and groups in Lebanon. We can define such factors and their effects as follows:

- Sharp sectarian and political polarizations (the culture of severing ties with different people), which restricts potential communication outside closed affiliation circles (the party, the religious community, the area, and others), thus doing away with a basic value of volunteerism, namely non-discrimination.
- Economic instability and the increasing poverty rate in Lebanon, which restrains our priorities as individuals to ensuring our basic existential needs such as food, water, education, and a measure of entertainment, at the expense of our interest in public life.
- Frustration in political and social life leads in turn to marginalization, whereby individuals feel lonely amidst the crowd, and gradually lose their sense of belonging to society.
- The dispersion, vulnerability, or sometimes the corruption of governmental and non-governmental actors directly concerned with

mobilization and with the promotion of the concepts of volunteerism and social responsibility.

Who is the volunteer?

The volunteer is every individual or group willing to do a service, an act, a job, or an activity without being interested in receiving direct financial remuneration. The activity often brings public or private benefits to individuals and to society.

Based on my experience in working directly with volunteers in Lebanon, I can list some age groups in society that proceed to volunteering with different percentages:

- People aged 30 and above: they often volunteer for issues within a time and type frame involving education, consultations, administrative issues, public relations, and provide key mobilization and support. They volunteer for different and sometimes conflicting reasons such as spending some time, looking for an opportunity leading to achievements, looking for a job, doing volunteer work in the post-retirement period, and others.
- Young volunteers, divided into two different categories:
 - First, school students often attracted by direct volunteering services involving infrastructure, animation, and camping. It is necessary to pay special attention to this group and to provide them with all available prospects since they constitute the safest investment in the long run.

- Second, university students: it is worth mentioning in this regard that training is by no means equivalent to volunteering, but it is a key factor in attracting volunteers. University student volunteers are often active in their early undergraduate years after which they focus on graduation, finding a job opportunity, or emigrating. This group is characterized by offering various direct volunteering services and contributes to them by conducting specialized field and office research. Furthermore, they have the potential to play leadership roles in the dissemination of culture and empowerment (trainers, animators, preparation for cultural meetings, and seminars).
- Young workers: this group has different needs and roles to play. In addition to performing direct volunteering tasks, this group plays a major role in fostering the solidarity and cooperation of local communities, thus constituting an essential factor in gaining credibility and in achieving the desired outcome of the potential development program.

It is important to note in this connection that volunteers are by no means expected to work for free; therefore, their roles are not restricted to the executive stage. For this reason, it is necessary to adopt the concept of partnership at the executive, planning and assessment stages.

Motivations behind volunteering:

- Religious, philanthropic, or emotional commitment. In such cases, volunteers should be urged to play their roles as citizens.

- The need to make positive changes, as a result of their frustration or awareness.
- Looking for recognition, appreciation, and self-realization (exploring one's own capabilities).
- The ability to provide services in the form of contribution or remuneration, be it moral or financial.
- Having the potential and/or willingness to modernize society and to contribute to its development.
- Wishing to build relationships and searching for social ties such as friendships.
- Looking for institutional frames having common values, ideas, and common concerns, with the aim of moving to action.

Ideas on how to attract volunteers:

- Targeting volunteers in public or private places such as schools, universities, clubs, and theaters; organizing quick and specific activities including public debates at university or school open spaces, giving presentations in development and civic culture classes, showing films, and advocating developmental issues in sports and artistic activities.
- The adoption of geographic, sector and class decentralization in attracting volunteers, thus targeting them in the cities, the countryside, at universities, schools, and vocational training institutes, regardless of their socio-economic status.
- Raising people's basic needs as issues necessitating action, in order

to cause positive changes in reality and to rectify injustice.

- Building partnerships with different media by focusing on specialized programs dealing with youth, developmental, cultural, and social issues, and establishing relationships with the journalists themselves.
- Creating partnerships with community service programs at schools and universities.
- Making available to the youth the means of information production and management such as theaters, offices, the internet, and audiovisual equipment, thereby widening the scope of issues of public concern put at the disposal of the youth.
- Providing the administrative and executive incubator for the ideas in need of further elaboration and development.
- Providing opportunities of communication and getting to know different people, away from abuses and political exploitation.

Potential fields of volunteerism

At the local level:

- Identifying needs and conducting field research.
- Working directly with people (awareness, sensitization, focus groups, community meetings and activities).
- Contributing to the definition of the project/case in question (playing the role of the alternative media, i.e. without making the issue at stake open to the public at large).
- Attracting new volunteers/supporters (each informing new ones).

At the national level:

- Conducting specialized studies and researches.
- Exerting pressure and influence on decision-makers with respect to public policy (reducing the voting age, the entitlement of Lebanese women to grant their nationality to their children, pursuing youth-friendly policies...).
- Advocating just causes and mobilizing public opinion for them (fair trade, public places, making education accessible to all, addressing the problem of poverty in Lebanon...).
- Fostering culture and social mobilization.

It is necessary to learn from the experience of volunteerism in an attempt to restore the long-undermined confidence between the youth and the state, in addition to doing away with the inevitability of conflict between the youth on the one hand and the state on the other hand. Consequently, all governmental agencies should be considered partners and favorable factors until the opposite is proven, and experiments of unsuccessful cooperation with some governmental agencies should not be generalized. Local authorities, i.e. municipalities, are considered among the most important governmental agencies having the potential to set up successful experiments in this respect.

Useful suggestions on the management of volunteers

Experience shows that keeping volunteers is harder than attracting them. As a result, one has to deal with volunteerism with a great sense of

responsibility and transparency, especially that in case of failure, we will not lose a volunteer taking part in a specific project, framework, or issue, but we may lose an individual who opted for involvement in public life and s/he may lose this desire in general.

For this reason, it is important that the management of volunteers takes into consideration many important and essential points as follows:

The needs of volunteers:

- Basic human needs (food, rest, safety).
- Psychological and moral support, having to do with safety, work conditions, and relationships with other people.
- Stimulation and stimulation factors such as achievements, recognition, new challenges, assuming responsibilities, development, and progress.
- Empowerment and capacity-building (general basic training in the concept of fair development and its techniques, specialized training varying according to needs, animation, creative drama, photography, film-making, and others).

The rights of volunteers:

- Receiving orientation, as well as training and supervision, both of which are necessary to accomplish their tasks.
- Learning how to improve skills at work.
- Receiving respectful treatment.
- Expecting not to waste one's time due to bad planning in the team

they joined.

- Being trusted and supplied with confidential information needed to do their work.
- Working in an environment enabling them to make suggestions for work improvement.
- Having their work documented and receiving a certificate/written assessment on the work done.
- Respecting their privacy and personal values.

The duties of volunteers:

- It is very important in this regard to agree with volunteers about their duties so that their commitment is purely voluntary.
- Sticking to the time schedule of the volunteerism task.
- Undertaking only the tasks they can perform so as to avoid embarrassment.
- Having a sense of responsibility.
- Preserving the privacy of the targeted group they might work with.
- Being open-minded and accepting differences and criticism.

Guidelines on the daily management of volunteers:

- Maintaining transparency at different levels of decision-making and handling finances.
- Reducing the space between social workers and volunteers.
- Involving volunteers in the decision-making process.
- Dealing with volunteers as partners at different planning,

implementation, and evaluation levels.

- Being flexible with volunteers and understanding their needs and wishes.
- Discarding direct personal relationships while doing volunteer work.
- Adopting a clear and written mechanism to solve conflicts upon their occurrence.

Finally, it should be emphasized that volunteerism is an important tool to foster relations between individuals and communities in societies in general, and in politically and economically vulnerable societies in particular, Lebanon being a good example. Volunteerism is often a unifying force whereby work is dealt with at the level of policies, not politics. Volunteerism creates meeting forums for different individuals and communities, thus cutting across the barriers of binding and narrow affiliations we use to screen out people who are different from us.



The Conduct of Committed People: from Involvement to Responsibility

Mr. Jean Marchal*

Introduction

It is necessary to make reference to the major role played by associations in building civil society, as they contribute to the following roles and tasks:

- They represent a form of democratic participation and a training agent preparing citizens for civic life.
- They are agents of socio-economic development.
- They are a tool of defense and promotion of collective and public rights.

We see a growing mobilization of civil society in different countries for the protection and promotion of the right of assembly, the efforts made by civil society organizations in Lebanon being an example. We should also underline the efforts made at the philosophical level to define the scope and content of the right of assembly. In addition, associations constitute an arena of freedom and development for all sorts of initiatives and projects.

The freedom enjoyed by a civil society organization is certainly considerable, but in order to fully benefit from it, it is absolutely necessary to understand its limitations and abide by its rules. Indeed, it is very easy

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to create an association, but it is much more difficult to manage it efficiently and wisely in the long run.

The work of associations rests on men and women fully devoted to the association, and volunteers play a major part in the operation and management of the hierarchies.

The concept of volunteerism

Volunteerism is not a commercial activity and the value of the work done is not economically measured. The gift of time is a service as volunteerism is a social and societal relationship, not a barter whereby the value of the work is exchanged with a financial corresponding value. Donations are not sacrifices since donors are rewarded by realizing the significance of their work.

In a society where reference points are missing and where there is a “search for meanings”, volunteerism proves its ability to provide spaces of “freedom”, “equality” and “brotherhood”. The ethics of volunteerism seem to contradict the utilitarian strategies often observed in our professional life, and sometimes in family life.

Volunteers looking for meanings and for practices consistent with their principles, devote their time in a commitment that can be classified as part of association projects.

For the philosopher Jacques Derrida, what is transferred is none other

than the time devoted, “devoting time”, “what is done during this time.”

Consequently, what do “the beneficiaries”, usually the receivers, give while they devote time and work as volunteers? What do they offer themselves? What do they offer their families, the streets and society where they live? What do they offer to other people? What do they receive from their families, the neighborhood, and society by donating? How do they give? What induces them to give? Do we grant them the freedom to give?

We should all think of donation differently. It is not a series of scattered acts or even a one-sided action.

Devoting one’s time is offering oneself and establishing a relationship and a link, whereas receiving means receiving “consciously”; it is to receive the link, to feel that one socializes, and belongs to society and to a group. Repaying is building, shaping one’s personality, and laying the foundations of self-esteem. The person is master of his/her own value and becomes an active community member. Donating has three aspects: “giving, receiving, repaying.”

Marcel Mauss describes these exchanges as “common social phenomena” involving not just the individual, but also all the members of a group, tribe or family. They affect all of society and its balance.

The three-fold obligation of “giving, receiving, repaying” continues to condition our modern societies, despite our demand for operational effectiveness.

The concept of volunteer work

In France, volunteerism is perceived within a strict framework of laws and decrees and it is embodied in different ways:

- Voluntary civil service created by the July 12, 2006 decree. Its duration varies between six, nine or twelve continuous months as a minimum. The service is open to young people aged between 16 and 25, and covers activities such as the prevention of and fight against exclusion, providing aid and company to old people and to the physically disabled, and providing information on public health. The staff salaries are paid by the state.
- Association volunteering created by the May 23, 2006 Act, for a maximum duration of two years. It is a contract on a mission of public interest with educational, social, humanitarian, sports, and cultural characteristics. The funds are provided by the association, with governmental approval.
- Volunteerism of international solidarity, created by the February 23, 2005 Act. This two-year contract is managed by associations approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with respect to cooperation in the development of humanitarian action. The contract is funded and provided by the same ministry.
- Civilian volunteering of social unity and solidarity, very recently established, for young people aged between 18 and 28 years. The

contract duration ranges from 6 to 24 months, and it is also funded by the government.

What is the difference between benevolence and volunteerism?

Benevolent workers receive no remuneration in any form whatsoever, and commit themselves freely, without any coercion. They usually devote little time to such activities.

However, volunteers receive remuneration for full-time work done over a long period of time. They sign contracts specifying mutual commitments with the organizations employing them.

Why do associations work?

The challenge between social work and its economic advantages occupies a central role in the daily life of association directors. The method they use to meet this challenge could often serve as models for other types of organizations.

In order to have an idea put into action, we should perform common rituals and recognize ourselves in common practices as practitioners or as militants in a base cell.

Rituals make us imagine that the diversity of our repeated social practices has an impact on social life.

Common forces motivating volunteers:

- Recognizing the difficulty of commitment to collective action.
- Protest and feeling permanent indignation as part of the commitment.
- Self-giving, not in the sense of charity, but in the sense of Marcel Mauss' triptych "giving, receiving, repaying".

The meaning and its production are managed in a combination of the tools allowing for a proper economic management of the organization. At the same time, management tools that can rigorously produce meaning within the organization are devised, which allows for progress at two levels: the social project and commitment to the association.

An act of commitment

Commitment is a value that can be understood in the sense of "conduct" or in the sense of "an act of decision". It could designate a lifestyle according to which individuals are actively involved in this world, are responsible for what is going on, and pave the way for action. Commitment could also designate acts by which they bind themselves to their own future selves, either through some steps to make, or an activity they will engage in, or even having to do with their own life. A commitment is a type of attitude about how to handle a situation, or to carry out an ongoing action. It is therefore opposed to the attitudes of withdrawal, indifference, and non-

participation. It must certainly be translated into actions; it is a lifestyle, a way of finding oneself and of creating bonds to events and to others! It is normal to passively find oneself in a situation, because one either feels powerless to change it, or accepts to model one's attitudes on it without interfering.

Situations requiring our commitment always have a properly human significance; they are not merely natural settings, but they influence other lives.

It is obvious that such interest is linked to responsibility. Committed people engage in a course of action which has so far been pursued without them and prove that they also become responsible for the tasks they perform, by the attitude they take, and they also assume responsibility in an efficient and objective manner. Being responsible for a situation or an action is to be responsive, which means highlighting it as a cause.

People responsible for an initiative announce it by simply being ready to present it as a matter of principle, to explain it, to give reasons behind it, and to bear all the consequences arising from it.

Nevertheless, what is noticeable in the conduct of commitment is that it is to a large extent beyond the actors' control, regarding both the past and the future. The latter just inherit the situation they are handling, which was actually caused by other wills and other actions.

Consequently, it is participation that paves the way for responsibility as

one can assume different responsibilities even if they were not personally concerned. For this reason it can be said that action has a meaning. It is precisely the means by which people explore the meaning of life and try to give it the content they deem most consistent with their requirements. The virtue of commitment consists of preventing the aggravation of a situation and the restriction of life to the circle of fatality; it is to restore meaning even to what could threaten survival, and keep life open to the future.

The conduct of engagement, therefore, has an anticipatory character. By letting one's will leave an impact on events, it restores to the latter their human meaning and announces a figure, a plan, still to come. It is on the basis of such determination that we can refer to idealism, meaning, or value, and from it we can derive the efficiency and dynamism proper to it. I would say then that doing something rather than being someone defines the real meaning of acting and of fulfilling oneself.

Conclusion

By participating in community life, volunteers give a part of their life, their time, and their experience. In return, they must be able to fully participate in the life of associations, as well as in decision-making and rule ... Thus, they live as real citizens in their neighborhood, city, town, and country... For this reason, democracy in civil society associations is crucial.

In the framework of the fundamental role played by associations referred

to in the introduction, it is necessary that democratic representation allows all the members, and certainly all volunteers working under the umbrella of the association, to express their views in the elections conditioning the democratic functioning of associations.

That is how participatory democracy works, whereby the rights and duties of each volunteer are respected.



The Debate

Moderated by Mrs Dunia Bassil, Roundtable IV was held at OMSAR offices under the title “The Status of Volunteers in the Organizational Hierarchies of NGOs” with the aim of examining the current conditions of volunteers working for NGOs in Lebanon.

After the presentations, the discussions revolved around the following questions and concerns: What are currently the main strengths in the area of volunteerism in Lebanon? What are the major weaknesses and problems both volunteers and NGOs are encountering these days? How is the concept of volunteerism defined in Lebanon? How are we, as NGOs, trying to help volunteers develop a sense of responsibility, and participate in the decision-making process?

The discussions mainly focused on two pivots: the problems currently arising from the Lebanese context or from the work of NGOs themselves with respect to volunteerism in Lebanon, and the possible solutions to these problems.

The problems identified include the following:

- A reduction in the number of volunteers in Lebanon.

- The lack of an NGO list facilitating the orientation of the motivated youth toward any specific organization.
- The lack of financial reward given to charity workers in Lebanon.
- Limiting the freedom and time of volunteers.
- A lack of commitment at the national level which leads to a lack of commitment to the organization.
- Major economic problems in Lebanon, compounded by heavy financial constraints in family life make commitment to organizations rather difficult.
- Volunteers' affiliation with political parties offering them remuneration for their services.
- Higher rate of volunteers in rural areas than in the cities.
- The existence of corruption in governmental agencies and in NGOs.
- A large number of legally registered organizations in contrast to the small number of volunteers.
- The lack of distinction between charity workers and volunteers.
- The precarious security conditions in Lebanon.

The solutions and suggestions were put forward as follows:

- A reconsideration of the concept of volunteerism (the lack of remuneration).

- The production of a booklet including a list of NGOs in order to help the youth find an organization where they can work as volunteers.
- The organization of training workshops for volunteers within a special mechanism or frame.
- The promotion of the role played by municipalities in volunteerism.
- Drawing benefits from the participation of aged volunteers in some NGO activities owing to their extensive experience.
- An examination of employment opportunities attracting the youth, and identifying tasks and jobs beneficial to volunteers in order to help them fulfill themselves.
- The allocation of a small budget to volunteer work by every NGO and offering incentives to volunteers to encourage them to volunteer again, thus allocating part of the overall project budget as financial reward for volunteer work.
- An examination of the socio-economic status of potential young volunteers.
- The expansion of social services provided by NGOs in order to keep volunteers.
- Surveying public opinion on the existing NGOs.
- Creating new ways to attract volunteers and new techniques to reach the largest possible number of volunteers. They include the idea of

volunteering for scientific or intellectual activities rather than expecting remuneration, which can be made clear on the website.

- The creation of a centralized authority to coordinate all NGO activities.
- The creation of a higher council for volunteerism in Lebanon.
- The development of the education of volunteerism starting at school.

The logo consists of a circle divided horizontally into two halves. The top half is white and contains the word "Round" in a dark blue serif font. The bottom half is dark blue and contains the word "Table" in a white serif font. To the right of the circle is a large, dark blue number "5" in a serif font.

Round
Table 5

**The Role of the Media in Promoting
Civil Society Concerns and Initiatives
November 18, 2008**

The Role of the Media in Promoting Civil Society Concerns

and Initiatives

Ali Al-Amin*

I would like to welcome the participants in this assembly, particularly our colleague Ghayath Yazbek, civil society activist Ziad Abdel Samad, journalists, and representatives of civil society organizations. I need to commend, on your behalf, the role played by the Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform (OMSAR) in the EU-funded AFKAR II Program by creating an additional forum for gathering and dialogue among non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with a view to achieving goals related to citizens' needs which are often missing in political agendas. It is in this forum that the objective of the dialogue assembly can be pursued under the title "The role of the media in promoting civil society concerns and initiatives."



This assembly aims at shedding light on the role of the media in underlining and publicizing civil society concerns and initiatives, as well as on the magnitude of journalists' interest in this respect and the difficulties and obstacles they encounter.

On the other hand, this assembly aims at examining the interest and competence of civil society organizations in delivering information about their activities and in identifying the impediments they face in this connection.

* *Editor-in-Chief of "Chou'oun Janoubiyya" Southern issues magazine, and member of the editorial board of Al-Balad newspaper.*

This enables us to answer the questions raised about the feasibility of developing a strategy that ensures continuity in the flow of information between civil society and the media.

Just as the scope of activities performed by civil society institutions has developed and expanded over the last decades, so the role of the media has grown to make it one of the central pillars of human life whereby we cannot think of life without the media, which has invaded each and every home, and probably each room under different aspects. As a result, we have witnessed over the past two decades a boom in satellite channels and the internet in each corner of the world.

In Lebanon, we can say that we are media pioneers in the Arab World. Indeed, in comparison with their Arab fellows, the Lebanese are pioneers in launching newspapers, radio stations and TV channels in many Arab countries. They are also the forerunners in promoting the role of NGOs and their proliferation.

On the basis of this preliminary inference, it can be said that the Lebanese are concerned with offering a model of positive interaction between the media and civil society in order to widen the margin of democracy. We are doomed to advance step by step on the path leading to the modern state, based on the self-evident conviction that the development of the relationship between the media and civil society is to shift the Lebanese individual from a mere number in a parish to a full-fledged citizen in a state.

The Relationship between the Audiovisual Media and NGOs: Reality and Expectations Mr. Ghayath Yazbek*

There is no doubt that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a pioneering and essential role in modernizing underdeveloped or developing societies as they undertake educational, awareness-raising, and motivational tasks. It is needless to remind you that countries or societies with such designations have either inefficient governance for different reasons, or deficient governance, or repressive and hegemonic governance. Amidst such a hindering and complex paradox, how do NGOs operate, and what are the main methods they rely on to market their ideas and carry out their awareness tasks? In order to avert being lost in examples from the near and distant parts of the world in this short presentation, I will limit it to the Lebanese situation as it represents the focus of our research and our first concern. Another reason is that Lebanon constitutes a special case including all the Third World characteristics while it displays none at the same time. Thus, it has a young and educated population with a unique democratic tradition, though at risk, along with an economic crisis, but it has the ability to overcome it on a daily basis and to coexist with it gracefully and even smoothly.



An examination of Lebanon's national

* *Journalist, General Manager of ANB TV station.*

arena reveals that it swarms with NGOs with an international background, but they are run by the private sector or multinational institutions affiliated to the United Nations, the European Union, or others. They flourished after the Lebanese war and have developed their activities from first aid and health care to cultural issues, the promotion of means to defend democracy, and acquainting people with their rights. A preliminary examination of the paradox hindering their work and preventing the dissemination of their ideas reveals that their relationships with the print media such as newspapers and magazines are much better than they are with local TV channels. This could be attributed to the fact that newspapers always lack material and seek to fill spaces and columns, knowing that the Lebanese people, according to the studies, read a little and watch TV more, while the youth are increasingly inclined to surf the Internet and take an interest in issues that have nothing to do with education, similarly to all the youth in today's world.

Why is it a paradoxical relationship? What are the reasons behind it? And what kind of relationship exists between NGOs and TV stations?

1- TV administrations, particularly news departments, content themselves with a cold and quick coverage of NGO events, and devote to them little time and a secondary place in the classification of programs. They are often referred to as what is called quick miscellaneous news or the magazine.

2- A monitoring of program networks in TV channels shows the lack of joint programs produced by TV stations and NGOs, except in some TV channels not ranking at the top according to statistics, either because of the lack of NGO budgets, or because of the availability of small funds that only satisfy shaky TV stations and do not satisfy their

more powerful competitors.

3- The issues raised by NGOs are often dealt with in an unattractive manner, without benefiting from the fascinating methods or available TV potential. In this case, the products cannot be well marketed, used or sold in the market; they rather become a burden that TV administrations would like to avert, and if forced to broadcast them, they do so late at night.

4- If the TV industry is excessively drifting into mediocrity and making quick profits, NGO officers on the other hand, have not developed communication means with the media, nor have they allocated from their budgets funds which are indeed available and tempting to TV stations, at least at a minimum level. However, they spend huge sums on booklets and advertisement publications that require large budgets while their impact is limited, at a time it is assumed that the Lebanese no longer spend their time on reading, nor are they following up cultural and educational activities.

5- I do not exaggerate or make a false accusation if I say, with the aim of rectifying the course of action in order to see an improved performance, that NGO officers tend to use the authority delegated to them to further personal interests, not to make money, God forbid, but to create a social gateway allowing them to enter the business, financial, and political world. As a result, the NGOs they work for find themselves immersed in the labyrinth of Lebanon's domestic politics, which leads to their exploitation by some media companies having reached an advanced stage of sectarianism, in which case the door is closed to competing media companies.

If these are the realities of the ambiguous relationship between NGOs and the audio-visual media, what are the expectations and how to fulfill them?

At the level of NGOs, the management of such organizations is supposed to focus on finding out successful financial, professional, and practical means to start investing in TV stations and the Internet, even if this requires the organization to invest in their staff at the financial and cultural levels.

At the level of TV stations, the staff are fully aware that it is their duty, and a feasible option too, to devote greater space in program networks to civil society organizations and NGOs owing to the valuable ideas they promote and to their contribution to social development. We all know that during TV broadcast time, there is considerably idle time both financially and morally. It is usually killed with programs below professional and even ethical standards, to say the least, in addition to distorting the perception of children, the youth, and adults.

At the level of the state, the government is only required to use its power to enforce the Media Law which requires and even imposes on the media the incorporation of cultural and social material in their programs. Once they are committed, they find themselves compelled to produce interesting and attractive programs that provide people with culture and attract advertisers.

These are just a few samples of the problems preventing the establishment of a perfect relationship between non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and TV stations. We should learn from our discussion useful lessons that help in creating the best ways to improve this relationship for the benefit of all parties and the Lebanese community.

Toward an Effective Partnership between Development Organizations and the Media

Ziad Abdel Samad*

Introduction

Civil society is the arena separating the authorities and the market on the one hand and society on the other hand. It protects society from the authorities' inclination to dominate it or to limit public and private freedoms supposedly enjoyed by every citizen. It also protects society from the market trend toward violating economic, social, and cultural rights by allowing for profits to grow through a liberalization of the economy and the promotion of free trade.

Civil society is made up of social movements, labor unions, and NGOs. Some consider the media part of civil society due to its role in shaping public opinion and raising public awareness to defend democracy, human rights, as well as private and public interests. In view of the diverse components of civil society, it follows that the trends and interests it reflects are diverse too. Maintaining such diversity could be enriching if the principle of respecting other people's opinion is upheld, and if democratic processes are adopted in managing diversity. However, in the absence of such principles and processes, diversity turns into resentment. At any rate,

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diversity is absent only under totalitarian regimes where the culture of democracy is non-existent.

The media plays a crucial role in reflecting such social diversity by adhering to objectivity, committing itself to democracy, and respecting the freedom of expression. It also plays an important role in reflecting the conflict among society, the authorities, and market mechanisms. Nevertheless, the question asked in this regard is: What if the media is owned by the state or by market forces as it is often the case? In such a case, how can the media be considered a forum for civil society, and a contributor to the expression of public opinion in an objective and responsible manner? How can civil society make an alliance with the media in defending political, civil, economic, social, and cultural rights? Does a really objective and independent media exist?

The role of the media in reflecting civil society concerns

Civil society has become one of the real and active tools of change. In fact, its role is no longer limited to providing developmental services, but it has also become a key militant in defending democracy, freedoms, and human rights by controlling, monitoring, and organizing defense and advocacy campaigns, and by calling on participation in decision-making that affects citizens' life. In other words, the task of civil society is to empower society to enable it to shift from the parish status to that of participatory citizenship.

Accordingly, it is not enough anymore to talk and present goals and rights, but change has rather become essential whereby it involves civil society with all its social, economic, and cultural components, including the media. No doubt, the media plays a key role in raising awareness, mobilization, follow-up, and monitoring, as well as in organization.

During the stages of planning field campaigns aimed at introducing change at different levels, civil society organizations take into consideration the fundamental role played by the media, according to what is called “the effective media strategy”. In this connection, the following questions need to be answered in order to allow civil society to fully benefit from the media:

- 1- How can an alliance be established between civil society organizations and the media? How is the media campaign planned, and consequently, how to address the media and motivate it?
- 2- How can the media contribute to the campaigns, along with civil society institutions, as a partner concerned with the process of change?

The relationship between the media and civil society organizations

To establish a strong relationship between the media and civil society, the common interests of both parties need to be safeguarded. Two questions should be taken into consideration in this regard.

The first question is that civil society organizations seek to ensure media coverage of their activities and movements. This role, which is closer to

advertising, contributes to the promotion of their issues and to raising public awareness of them.

The second question has to do with the media involvement in the campaigns and with adopting them as one of its basic concerns. By doing so, it contributes to the motivation and mobilization of public opinion, and it even contributes to shaping a public opinion capable of responding to the challenges of change.

As a result, and in order to contribute to the creation of closer relationships between the media, anchors, and civil society organizations, the focus of attention of the media must inevitably change. The media is often attracted by exciting stories and issues that draw viewers, or by political figures or government officials, thus giving them priority and attention at the expense of activities organized by civil society organizations. The latter should take into consideration such marketing needs and attempt to meet them as much as possible without influencing the content of the message to be conveyed to citizens.

On the other hand, trust must be built between the media and civil society organizations which raise doubts about the anchors' competences and do not provide them with adequate documents enabling them to properly shed light on the issues in question. Anchors, in turn, consider that civil society organizations do not take them seriously and accuse them of showing off, of attempting to polish their image, and of being opportunists and biased to donors. In this context, the media and anchors should focus

on the content of the message and try to convey it to citizens in the best possible professional manners, regardless of their positions.

In both cases, there is a lack of communication requiring mutual efforts. Anchors should devote special attention to civil society organizations, their activities, and programs, while the latter should devote special attention to the media, take into consideration their production conditions, and respect the convenient timing to spread and deliver the news or information. In both cases, there should be focus on the message and the objectives, and abstention from using the media in a way that is detrimental to the media and society at the same time.

How can the media assume a developmentally oriented role?

The developmentally oriented media expresses people's concerns and challenges, and the closer it draws to their problems, the more it gains their confidence and acceptance. Therefore, the developmentally oriented media should assume the duty of framing and popularizing development concepts stemming from citizen-related challenges. At the same time, they are expected to keep away as much as possible from imported concepts and from spreading them without developing or enriching them so that they match local conditions. This media fulfills different political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental tasks that contribute to opening society to modern ideas and principles. It also contributes to raising awareness of societal interests and to urging people to make efforts to find alternatives.

Modern techniques help to develop this role and to improve performance standards.

The developmentally oriented media should call for change through cultural and awareness-raising programs, and through plans and programs carefully developed in coordination with civil society organizations. This media should objectively circulate information, news, and opinions and prepare analytical reports. In sum, this media is responsible for raising issues, conveying messages, and clarifying objectives, while being accountable to citizens.

The developmentally oriented media should rely on skilled professionals having a development vision and strategy, the ability to think rationally, and to use modern techniques. Yet, the developmentally oriented media needs freedom, autonomy, and integrity as prerequisites for raising citizens' awareness and providing objective information that helps them select options according to their interests.

Lebanon's media played a major role at some historical moments and in different fields. It is still playing a fundamental role in raising awareness and in defending freedoms. However, the paradox it faces has to do with legal restraints imposed on the audiovisual media in particular, whether this has to do with licensing conditions or with restrictions on practice. This limits its freedom and makes it liable to legal action, which undermines its active developmental role. On the other hand, media licensing on the basis of apportionment has introduced segmentation to the

media and deprived it of objectivity.

Conclusion

Despite the lack of independence, the media can maintain objectivity by adopting a responsible attitude and by preserving professional standards while respecting different opinions and paving the way for meaningful and constructive dialogue.

In addition, the interests of both civil society and the media converge in the defense of freedoms, democracy, and human rights and in contributing to the development process. They are subject to pressure, attempts at co-optation and domination in different ways, starting with political pressure and ending in financial inducements, hence the need for mutual cooperation in order to face such challenges and to achieve common goals. Moreover, defending the freedoms and rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups in particular are common goals. As a result, a relationship built on sound foundations between the media and civil society is a common need that must be underlined and met. The role of the media would then be complementary to and supportive of the role played by civil society in the defense of public and private freedoms, in introducing change, and in promoting citizenship and social justice.

The Debate

After the presentations, the floor was given to the following anchors and representatives of civil society organizations: Toufic Osseyran, Tanios Duaybes, Khayriyya Kaddouh, Mona Ghazal, Najwa Al-Cha'ar, Nahla Mounir, Faysal Abdel Sater, Raghida Al-Halabi, Isabelle Kesrouani, Lara Haoui, Khatoun Haydar, Denise Al-Murr, Ibrahim Haydar, Sana' Richa, and others. Most comments were made about the flawed relationship between the media and NGOs, and different ideas were put forward, most revolving around standardization. Accordingly, positive interaction is not fostered by media coverage of NGO activities, but rather has to do with the level of media commitment to societal issues.

Recommendations

The participants came up with a list of recommendations as follows:

- Networking NGOs working in the same field and using information campaigns to shed light on common issues.
- Taking advantage of TV space devoted by the Ministry of Information to civil society organizations.
- Making professional and cultural efforts within media institutions with a view to enhancing the anchors' cultural background regarding

civil society issues.

- Developing the local media on the one hand, and stimulating the media interest in issues pertaining to areas outside the capital and its suburbs on the other hand.
- Suggesting the establishment of an NGO including specialized staff working in the media, advertising, and marketing, as well as civil society and government representatives. The role of such an NGO consists of:
 - fostering the relationship between civil society and the media both ways;
 - urging parliament to enact laws promoting cooperation and coordination between the media and civil society;
 - opening new horizons in this connection and facilitating common contributions for mutual benefit.



Round
Table 6

**Post-Traumatic Program Approaches:
Tasks and Challenges
January 12, 2009**

Psychological Trauma: Definition, Treatment and Follow-up

Nathalie Deir Sahaguian*

During disasters, wars, and revolutions, some countries and populations experience traumatic, stressful, and painful incidents causing many to suffer physical and psychological illnesses. However, the Arab World in general and Lebanon in particular represent a special case in this regard.

The traumatic incidents and experience suffered by our people in terms of bombing houses, schools, public and private places, random fire shooting, shelling of residential areas, martyrdom, physical disabilities, and terrifying scenes are all considered causes of psychological traumas as well as behavioral, emotional and intellectual disorders. The latest studies show that the main factor in determining a human being's reactions is not the traumatic incident itself, but rather the person's ability to cope with such an incident.

The definition of trauma

Etymologically speaking, the Greek term trauma refers to an injury or damage to the body tissues. Nowadays, we use the expression psychological trauma to describe serious or violent incidents that are considered harmful and life-threatening whereby extraordinary efforts are

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required to handle them. The trauma is caused by any incident attacking human beings and penetrating their defense system. Such an incident may affect the personality and cause physical illnesses if it is not kept under control and handled quickly and effectively. The trauma leads to deep fear, impairment, or horror. It is an external, spontaneous, and unexpected incident characterized by harshness. It even bursts the human soul and threatens lives in such a way that all defense systems can no longer enable a person to adapt to it.

Two factors make the incident traumatic:

- Death threats or serious injuries suffered by oneself or by others.
- A strong feeling of fear or powerlessness.

The traumatic incident cannot be under control; it destroys our sense of security and makes us vulnerable and confused.

The incident does not need to affect a person directly. Learning about the death of a close person or watching scenes of aggression and violence can have a traumatic effect. It can leave an impact on a single person involved in a car accident or a crime of violence, as it can leave an impact on the entire society, as it is the case in wars, earthquakes, or hurricanes.

In most cases, the incident continues to live in our consciousness for some time, but with the help of the family and friends, most people manage to cope with the incident and can resume doing their usual daily tasks. However, quite a large number of people suffer from post-traumatic

symptoms and develop a post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

How do people react during a traumatic incident?

During the incident itself, people are not always aware of what is going on inside themselves. At the same time, the flow of strong emotions and ideas drives them to do their duties automatically and to instinctively take the necessary measures ensuring survival.

The traumatic incident creates fear, powerlessness and anger toward the world which has immediately become dangerous. People suffering the PTSD face major difficulties following the traumatic incident whose effects continue to affect their daily life long after its occurrence. In many cases, those suffering the PTSD develop a number of symptoms hindering the flow of regular daily life. They might attempt to go back to the incident and feel it recurs time and again. Nightmares, poor concentration, and ongoing anxiety are considered additional symptoms of this disorder.

The symptoms of trauma

People suffering from the effects of a psychological trauma display some or all of the following symptoms:

1- Recurrence of the same experience:

a- A feeling of experiencing the same incident with the repetition of the same confusing ideas, pictures, or feelings related to the

trauma.

b- Suffering nightmares.

c- Continuously recalling the past and reliving the traumatic experience several times.

d- Experiencing a feeling of pressure and anxiety when encountering trauma-related things.

2- Evasion:

a- Avoiding ideas, conversations, or feelings related to the incident.

b- Avoiding places, events, or people reminding them of the trauma.

c- Having little interest in things they used to enjoy.

d- Lack of happiness, fun, love, and other positive feelings.

e- Experiencing difficulties in thinking about the future.

3- Extreme excitement:

a- Sleep disorders.

b- Feeling distress and anger for unclear reasons.

c- Poor concentration and difficulties in studying.

d- Feeling of continuous irritability for unknown reasons.

e- Recoiling at every loud noise or sudden movement.

4- Addiction:

a- Post-traumatic alcoholism to get rid of annoying ideas and feelings.

b- Post-traumatic use of drugs to relieve distress.

5- Guilt feelings:

a- Feeling guilty about surviving the traumatic incident.

b- Feeling guilty about one's behavior during the traumatic incident.

6- Schizophrenia:

a- Feeling at times that they are separate from their own selves, along with an inability to remember what they did over the past minutes or even hours.

b- Feeling that they “are not themselves” while watching themselves from a distance.

If people experience one or more of the aforementioned symptoms, they should seek professional advice.

Intervention methods to help people affected by traumatic incidents:

- Transferring affected people from the tension area to a safer place.
- Giving them the chance to describe the incident from their own perspective and in their own language.
- Asking them to express their feelings during the incident and now.
- Helping them to feel safe and to talk freely.
- Using the skills of listening actively and asking open-ended

questions.

- Using the techniques of muscle relaxation to help them breathe deeply and feel comfortable.
- Providing them with emotional support and assurances that make them feel safe.
- Having a discussion with them about measures they took to protect themselves, and how they can act in the future if such an incident recurs.
- Involving the trauma victims in group activities that help them relieve their emotional tension.

Important interventionist considerations taken into account while handling traumatic incidents:

- The severity, duration and recurrence of the trauma.
- The maturity and chronological age of the trauma patient.
- The previous experience of the trauma patient.
- The interpretation of the incident by the patient.
- The patient's culture and beliefs.
- The patient's psychological make-up.

Comment

It should be noted that some symptoms appear immediately after the

traumatic incident, while others appear at a later stage and need further follow-up and attention as well as greater efforts.

The memory of the traumatic incident is much more severe than the incident itself. For instance, soldiers fight the enemy on war fronts and experience all sorts of traumas, but they never suffer a breakdown. Yet, after some time elapses following the end of the war, they are haunted by nightmares and are moved by the trauma memory. People seeking psychological advice later on, are not driven by the traumatic incident, but by the traumatic effect.

The difference between a physical and a psychological trauma is the time factor. Patients going through a psychological trauma are affected by its symptoms at a later stage, whereas in the case of those going through a physical trauma, the injured person starts feeling the pain right upon having the injury.

Mental traumas are not caused by a specific incident, but rather by the different factors mentioned above.

Secondary trauma

It is normal and expected that stress brings about reactions on the part of social workers, the staff of humanitarian organizations, or psychologists. Some of these specialists may be survivors of a disaster, or they may be directly or indirectly affected. The reactions of all rescuers are provoked

by stress.

The tasks they perform could be arduous and dangerous, while the work requirements could prevent them from sleeping and cause them chronic fatigue. They face different types of stressful conditions, including the belief that they are underperforming. At times, they could blame themselves even if limitations result from reality, or from organizational and bureaucratic constraints beyond their control. They could have strong emotional reactions to the survivors' stories or feelings, as they could also feel guilty because they have to "choose" whom to help. Furthermore, some survivors could bear resentment and ungratefulness against them.

They should be cautious about some signs of stress. If they see or hear anything that annoys them, they should discuss it with their colleagues at the end of each day, establish an assistance mechanism, and express their feelings immediately. They should also listen to their colleagues in dialogue sessions held in forums supervised by specialists in the field.

Challenges to the Establishment of Psychosocial Programs Dia' Abou Mosleh*

I was asked to talk about my experience in establishing psychosocial programs with a focus on trauma and on the importance of professional psychological and psychiatric care. In fact, there is a clear worldwide inclination to adopt this approach in wars and disasters, but interventions do not apply in cases of traumas suffered by the masses. Juveniles constitute one of the groups that benefit from such interventions and consequently funding; but the case of juveniles in general is different due to the specificity of the group in question. Similarly, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are considered a special case requiring such interventions.

Before presenting organizational and managerial details, it is quite relevant to say in this respect that a traumatic experience can lead to a negative view of life or behavioral modifications (damage to the psyche), but these modifications do not necessarily threaten a person's survival. The Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) occurs when a person's conditions deteriorate dramatically and the person can no longer cope with them. Only then, can it be considered a PTSD case, hence the need for medical intervention by a psychiatrist and/or a psychologist, and/or others.

People suffering from PTSD constitute a minority having experienced a traumatic life incident.

* *Clinical psychotherapist.*

However, the issue of traumatized groups is a pretext and/or a cause for the establishment of psychosocial interventions as a standard response to conflict and disaster situations. These interventions take into consideration that groups affected by wars are traumatized and prone to psychosocial disorders (following the international therapeutic model). We can sum up the model as follows: traumatic experience brings about symptoms of trauma, low self-esteem, and disorder, which leads to abuse and violence. This, in turn, requires external intervention to break the violence-trauma cycle.

The above raises questions about the world inclination to focus on psychosocial interventions. This is obvious in the strategies of international NGOs, UN agencies, and other entities which rush to fund and intervene in psychosocial programs when other basic needs like food or shelter are not fully satisfied. Then, what are the priorities? Why is aid quickly provided in this regard? And finally, what is the added value?

Raising such questions leads us to a discussion of international politics, the new areas that international NGOs are focusing on, and their survival in the midst of war making. This can be simply summed up in the expression “external therapeutic governance”; but fortunately, or unfortunately, today’s topic should be restricted to the type of intervention, with the exclusion of the reasons behind it.

We cannot but concede that psychosocial interventions can be beneficial to groups liable to experience traumatic incidents. These interventions restore the life pattern that was either destroyed or mutilated owing to the various emergencies pertaining to the group. Assistance can be offered

within the framework of psychosocial interventions by normalizing life conditions and by setting a sort of frame in an “abnormal” situation. For instance, some parents insisted during the Lebanese civil war that their children should read a book per week, and that they should keep studying in order to carry on with studies at school, even when they were in the shelters. But, the parents or the care providers themselves sometimes need a defined frame.

Consequently, it is important to adopt these activities when people are refugees or displaced in reception centers. In addition, they are usually detained and lack mobility and the ability to pursue normal life activities.

Some points have to be taken into consideration while establishing psychosocial programs.

Psychosocial activities cannot be introduced before basic needs are met. Preliminary field research should be conducted when considering the adoption of a specific program. It is the first factor in assessing needs. Afterwards, the participants are identified; they are the persons and/or organizations active in the field. At the same time, their method of intervention is also set. Such steps are made in order to prevent an overlap of activities and to bridge gaps in the provision of services.

Finally, the idea of the program can be produced and a team can be formed on the basis of field research. Trust, in this connection, is considered as important as the expertise and qualifications of the team members, particularly during emergencies, because the follow-up and evaluation of interventions are not usually carried out immediately.

As for the establishment of the psychosocial program itself, a holistic approach to health should first be adopted, in addition to the different variables that affect people's well-being. This requires setting up interventions based on Maslow's¹ hierarchy of needs². The latter can be used as a springboard to move to the guidelines of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) for psychosocial support that started providing "basic services, and security, community and family support, focused non-specialized support, to finally reach specialized services³."

As a result there is a need to modify the adopted paradigm, which necessitates a shift of focus from the curative approach which deals with individual or group suffering caused by psychological disorders to the alternative, namely the preventive approach which requires work with people providing "focused non-specialized support". In the framework of this approach, it is essential to be aware of and respect the different characteristics of each group (age, gender,...), in addition to the various stages and changes that each group goes through during the different phases of a psychosocial program.

Regarding the activities, they vary in accordance with the types, methods, and approaches to psychosocial work. Psychosocial programs may involve play, art therapy, relaxation and meditation, focus groups,

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1. *Maslow's pyramid of needs is as follows starting from the base: physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem and finally self actualization.*
 2. *O. Ataya, L. Sahhab, D. Abou Mousleh, Policy paper on psychosocial interventions in Lebanon, 2007 - 2008. Supported by Ministry of Social Affairs/Higher Council for childhood, funded by HI/ECHO.*
 3. *Inter-Agency Standing Committee(IASC) 2007. IASC guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency settings. Geneva:IASC.*

playgrounds for sports and physical exercises, among others. The question is to what extent do the different psychosocial interventions meet people's real needs? This topic remains an open question.

According to the "Policy Paper on Psychosocial Interventions in Lebanon¹" several experts in the field put forward the following homogenous recommendations that can be used upon setting the relevant types of activities:

- Approaching the clinical, social, psychosocial, cultural, historical, anthropological, and political issues in a circular manner, including all the components of all the steps in the program cycle. (Losi)
- Aiming at meeting the needs self-identified by the communities benefiting from the services. (Jones)
- Constantly referring to local cultures and traditional therapy processes. (Losi)
- Avoiding the implementation of pre-packaged Western modalities of intervention. (Summerfield)
- Adopting a bottom-up approach, including beneficiary participation in the entire program cycle.
- Standardization of reports and current practices, and coordination and exchange of the best practices.
- Involving local partners such as NGOs, universities, and individual professionals.
- Adopting a decentralized and regionalized approach to

1. Ataya, Sahhab, Abou Mousleh, *op. cit.*

implementation as each governorate has different target populations and different needs.

In addition to the above, any social class and/or person has strengths; therefore, we have to bolster existing coping mechanisms and/or resilience and support networks, since undermining them can backfire and cause eventual dependence on services whose provision is restricted by a time limit. In this respect, we can cite Ataya, Sahhab, and Abou Mosleh:

- Aim at empowerment and reconstruction of individual, group and community roles in society (Schinina)
- Constantly refer to existing community and individual coping strategies (Pupavac)
- Involvement of local expertise in the design of training, delivery of training, provision of services, and the evaluation process.
- Involvement and enhancement of existing infrastructures such as the Social Development Centers (SDCs of the Ministry of Social Affairs in different Lebanese areas, and other similar bodies¹....).

Consequently, and in light of the psychosocial issues we are facing, it is pertinent to think of the future, particularly regarding the necessary steps to be made, and the organizations and individuals that can be engaged in the work, both in normal situations and in emergencies. In cases of emergencies, the issue is more critical because the time devoted to planning and team

1. Ataya, Sahhab, Abou Mousleh, *op. cit.*

formation is very limited; therefore, it is essential to set up the basis of work. Organizations and individuals should be assigned earlier so that they engage immediately and work on improving preparedness and mobilizing resources to meet arising needs. (Engage people who are considered trustworthy, trained, reliable, and be mindful of abuses of emergency situations to reap personal and/or organizational gain and others).

One should also keep in mind that psychosocial needs are not static; they are rather in constant flux, depending on the case and the period of time, as well as on other numerous considerations, such as changes and improvements, or their lack, in the target group, in addition to the living conditions. It depends on the circumstances and the progress of the case or group.

While planning emergency psychosocial interventions, priority should be given to securing and/or providing psychiatric care to the group of people needing it following the end of the program, since social support declines over time, before it is phased out. This necessitates the assignment of individuals and/or organizations to deliver mental health care and address other related needs that arise in the group benefiting from psychosocial support, which also involves psychological and/or psychiatric expert interventions, to name the basic specializations.

On the other hand, when planning response strategies, it is important to anticipate the psychosocial needs, not only of the masses and/or beneficiaries of the services, but also of those responding to emergencies, such as the support staff and volunteers. Attention must be devoted to gender, age and other vulnerabilities and/or characteristics while examining

the effects of disasters. According to Papadopoulos: “The combination of social and psychiatric care creates an amorphous mass that covers virtually all human needs, a clear definition of the target is also paramount, while implementing a psychosocial programme¹.”

Finally, when the internationals phase out, what can local NGOs, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), and other service providers do?

Now that the emergency situation is over and a group of people has been identified as needing further care, the complaint is not necessarily about suffering PTSD. Many people are diagnosed in emergency situations as they have other symptoms that showed or became visible due to the stressful conditions of the emergency situation.

International organizations usually do emergency stints lasting between 6 months and 18 months, but the current needs of the population cannot be met due to a lack of funding and because international NGOs are phasing out.

What is to be done? This is a program in itself that entails setting up a comprehensive referral system revolving around three main points²:

- Psychosocial activities at the community level.
- Specialized community care.
- Referral system.

We should also be aware of the need to set up structures whose costs are affordable to all people needing care, rather than creating bodies that only serve the wealthy.

1. *Ataya, Sahhab, Abou Mousleh, op. cit.*

2. *Ibid.*

The Debate

Roundtable VI was held at OMSAR on January 12, 2009 under the title “Post-Traumatic Program Approaches: Tasks and Challenges”.

It was moderated by Ms. Denise El Murr who pointed out that the event is aimed at sharing experience concerning psychosocial programs. After the presentations delivered by Ms. Nathalie Deir Sahaguian and Ms. Dia’ Abou Mosleh, the discussion was initiated by the moderator who raised the following questions:

- Who are the professional team members who should participate in psychosocial programs, depending on the level of intervention?
- What are the lessons learned from previous experience in psychosocial programs? What should be repeated and modified? And what is to be avoided in future experience?
- How can local NGOs ensure sustainability of programs and/or services even after funding has stopped?

The professional team

Regarding the team members, the participants identified various specializations that need to be included in the team. These are:

- A specialized trauma therapist who will provide psychological

counseling to the beneficiaries in need of assistance.

- A drama therapist who will facilitate the expression of feelings and catharsis.
- Social workers active in the field (specialized educators, social animators and social workers) who will ensure a link with the beneficiaries and the implementation of program activities.
- An occupational therapist who will work on the rehabilitation of people with bodily injuries, their adaptation to space, and their engagement in relaxation activities.
- Trained teachers who can detect stress disorder signs that follow PTSD, while working with children, and refer them to the proper therapists when the need arises.
- The engagement of members, not involved in field work, but capable of providing other team members with support.

The participants underlined the need to have a specialized trauma therapist who will meet the team members at least once every two weeks in order to help them express their feelings and talk about their hard work, since they live the traumatic experience while working with distressed people. Due to the considerable stress they undergo, they should be provided with psychological counseling to help them release information and to spare them burnout as a result. It should be noted that such

counseling does not consist of training sessions introducing new work techniques or methods; it is exactly an opportunity to express their feelings and concerns freely. This right, which should be claimed by the team members, is gradually gaining increased social acceptability, and is more widely enforced by social organizations.

The participants also raised the issue of non-professional volunteers. The following general guidelines were suggested to help them deal with the beneficiaries without doing them any harm:

- Detecting the stress disorder signs that follow PTSD and referring the person in question to a specialized therapist.
- Allowing a spontaneous expression of feelings.
- Avoiding “investigations” and specific questions about the traumatic incident that could revive memories people are not yet ready to discuss or deal with at present.

The lessons learned

While discussing their previous experience, the participants distinguished between two levels of intervention in the psychosocial programs they have implemented:

- Programs implemented during or after emergency situations.
- Programs implemented during regular traumatic experience such as imprisonment.

They identified successful tools used during the interventions and underlined the importance of the beneficiaries' active participation throughout the program cycle. As an illustration, they noted that drug addicts in the Roumieh Prison were able to empower each another by sharing their experience in focus groups, which constituted a key tool generating mutual emotional support.

On the other hand, they pointed out that trauma is no longer limited to a specific period of time, but rather seems to be transmitted from generation to another (secondary/transitional trauma).

Finally, they highlighted the importance of adopting a holistic approach taking into account the needs of the beneficiaries in psychosocial programs. During information release sessions, the topics most frequently referred to were linked to basic physical needs (providing food, safe housing, and others) which are regarded as a priority taking precedence over psychological well-being.

Sustainability

The participants listed the following impediments regarding the ability of local organizations to maintain sustainability:

- Most programs are planned on a short-term basis due to insufficient funding.
- Very few organizations predict and set up a “survival plan”, which allows

them to extend the program duration after the funding has stopped.

Only a few organizations work on prevention programs to raise general social awareness of trauma.

Accordingly, the following solutions were suggested:

- Cooperation among different NGOs.
- Active community participation in psychosocial activities (using the potential and skills of the beneficiaries).
- Identifying the bodies providing specialized community care.
- A referral system.

Ms. Dia' Abou Mosleh informed the participants about a policy paper on psychosocial interventions in Lebanon drafted by her, Ms Ola Ataya and Ms Leila Tarazi. The paper was produced under the auspices of the Higher Council for Childhood, the Ministry of Social Affairs, and funded by Handicap International (HI) and the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid (ECHO).

Finally, the participants agreed on the extreme importance of global prevention and emergency preparedness plans, both of which can help NGOs in preparing for the provision of assistance, and allow them to improve the quality of their interventions while ensuring their sustainability.



**The Promotion of the Sense of
Citizenship to Foster a
Friendly Environment
March 27, 2009**

Success Stories of Involving the Youth in Environmental Action and of Enabling them to Claim a Better Environment Raghida Haddad*

The Afkar Program operating in the framework of The Office of the Minister for Administrative Reform (OMSAR) which is dedicated to supporting Lebanese civil society, aspires to highlight the environmental dimension in the activities of community organizations, as the quality of our life depends on the conditions of our environment. Most of our daily life problems are environmental: the air is polluted, water is polluted, our food is unhealthy, the soil is poisoned in many areas, the forests are shrinking, and we don't know how to dispose of our wastes. We are all responsible for this deterioration, but if we do not want to bequeath the growing environmental problems to our children, we should start tackling them now.

How can a community organization contribute to environmental awareness and to the enhancement of environmental action? I will not talk about a hoped-for project or about potential, but about outcome achieved by an independent institution, namely *The Environment & Development* magazine that has worked since 1996 on involving the youth in environmental action and on empowering them to claim a better

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environment. Any serious endeavor to safeguard the environment should be built on new standards of conduct and personal commitment to properly deal with natural resources. This starts at school, since environmental awareness messages are often communicated to grown-ups by children.

The Environment & Development magazine has developed an environmental training program for schools, through which it organized training sessions targeting thousands of teachers who took practical knowledge to their schools in order to carry out environmental projects with the students. Every year, the magazine organizes an environmental competition involving students and teachers, in cooperation with The Ministry of Education and The Ministry of the Environment. By participating in these annual competitions, hundreds of schools have created environmental clubs for research and field work.

In the first school competition, the students were asked to come up with ideas to improve the environment in the street, the neighborhood, the village or the city where they live, and to present these ideas in written form or to illustrate them in drawings. More than 120,000 students participated in the competition, and their works were displayed in a big exhibition held in 1997 in Downtown Beirut. The following year, the topic of the competition was “The Environmental Conditions”. The students submitted reports on the environmental conditions of the areas surrounding their schools. Then, the reports were assembled to form a national level

study that was submitted by school teams to the officials as an expression of the environmental demands of the new generation. The study and other model reports submitted by the school teams and illustrated with field pictures were printed in a book that was distributed for free in schools. This activity was followed by a competition entitled “Environmentally Friendly Schools” in which the students conducted environmental projects in their schools and in the school surroundings. A fourth competition was organized under the topic “Art is the Friend of the Environment”, and in this framework plays and songs were performed by thousands of students under the supervision of Elias Rahbani and Nidal Al-Achkar. After the performance of some work samples at the Masrah Al-Madina Theater, twenty were produced for TV and broadcast in the Arab world.

In the competition “Explore Nature”, each school submitted a report on the flora that grows in its surroundings, and included the common name and the scientific one of each plant, as well as its characteristics and picture, by relying on references and the information of the locals, especially the elderly. Another competition under the topic “The Environmental Conditions in Lebanon” was also organized in the framework of a collective action carried out by each school in its surroundings. As a result, each one of those schools submitted a report on the sources of pollution and environmental deterioration, ranging from industries, to wastes, the soil, forests, urbanization, and other sources. The objective was to warn

students of the environmental conditions around their schools, urge them to study and analyze them, and suggest solutions to the problems, as a practical training in the assessment of their impact on the environment.

Accordingly, and within the scope of a practical training program organized by *The Environment & Development* magazine, the students of the environmental clubs launched a campaign at a later stage to discuss their claims with the municipalities and NGOs in order to remedy the situation in their neighborhoods.

Furthermore, the magazine produced 39 episodes of the educational TV program “The Environment Club”, with the participation of the students. It publishes *The Green Paper*, an environmental newsletter which it is distributed for free in schools. It has also published many books including environmental data for students of all ages.

The Youth Environment Parliament

Give the youth a chance and see what they are capable of doing.

For the first time, Lebanese students have the chance to have an environment parliament through which they can make their environmental concerns communicated to officials and decision-makers.

The Youth Environment Parliament (YEP) is a project initiated by *The Environment & Development* magazine in 2007 with the aim of promoting

the role of the youth in environmental policy-making. It also aims at enhancing environmental awareness at Lebanese schools in all areas. The members of this parliament work in committees that discuss environmental problems with a view to communicating their messages to decision-makers and promoting the enforcement of environmental legislation, on the basis of the principles of transparency, accountability, responsibility, and commitment to the environment. The work of the parliament is supervised by a steering committee including teachers, and whose members are selected in the general assembly of the participating schools. The student chosen by each school to be a member of the Youth Environment Parliament should be active and enthusiastic about environmental issues.

The students of the schools represented in this parliament participate in different activities in the framework of awareness-raising campaigns on pressing environmental matters. These activities include conducting field trips to examine environmental conditions, drafting reports, and holding meetings with mayors and Members of Parliament to discuss the environmental problems from the perspective of the youth.

The parliament organized a mobile fair that focuses on raising environmental awareness and that moves from one school to another. The topics addressed in the fair have to do with environmental problems such as air pollution, water sources, renewable energy, climate change, and the war impact on the environment. *The Environment & Development*

magazine has assigned a monthly supplement to cover the parliament activities.

The Youth Environment Parliament held its first general assembly in February 2007. Its 50 members elected the 11 members of the executive committee whose task is to coordinate activities. The election of the members took into consideration the geographic distribution of the candidates and their detailed programs. The candidate who gained majority vote for example established a program on the integration of persons with special needs in the action for the protection of the environment.

On May 8, 2007 the Youth Environment Parliament held a plenary session in the library of the Lebanese Parliament in Nejme Square, during which its members had a dialogue with the Chair of the Parliamentary Environment Committee, MP Akram Chehayyib, on many environmental issues, such as solid wastes, liquid wastes, quarries, and the impact of the war on the environment. After discussing these issues, they demanded the activation of environmental legislation in Lebanon.

One of the students inquired about the conditions to be met by an MP in order to be a member of the Parliamentary Environment Committee. Chehayyib explained that the members of this committee should not necessarily have a degree in the field, and that their membership follows the sectarian distribution of seats. One of the students replied saying that the Youth Environment Parliament is much better than the Lebanese

Parliament, as sectarianism is disregarded in the distribution of seats and tasks, and in the formation of committees.

As an example of environmental research conducted by the students with the encouragement of the Youth Environment Parliament, the students of Martyr Hassan Kassir High School in Bir Hassan produced a report entitled “The War on Lebanon: Impact and Repercussions on the Environment”. The report highlighted the environmental disaster that befell Lebanon’s sea, land, and air, and by relying on extensive evidence, it referred to the possibility that uranium was used during the July 2006 War. The students also met Dr. Bilal Nsouli, the Director General of the Lebanese Atomic Energy Commission, who informed them about a request by the Lebanese authorities and international bodies to conduct investigations and analyses about this issue. The report also mentioned the unexploded cluster bombs, the oil pollution of the sea and coast, rubble clearing operations, and the potentially toxic dust. The students concluded their report by recommending the establishment of a permanent operation office in the Ministry of the Environment which will follow up the environmental consequences of the Israeli aggression, the publication of transparent reports on the work procedure, warning citizens and giving them guidance on the remaining risks generated by the war.

The members of the Youth Environment Parliament made many field trips to the polluted sites and environmentally deteriorated areas, such as

disposal facilities, Beirut slaughterhouse, and the sewage outlet to the sea. They launched model projects in their schools, such as the establishment of nurseries in preparation for Lebanon's reforestation, waste sorting and recycling, and organizing environmental awareness campaigns targeting students and parents. They have had no hesitation in meeting the local authorities, particularly the municipal councils, to ask them to repair specific environmental damage, while they have suggested many workable solutions. Many of them have succeeded in improving the environmental conditions in their neighborhood and towns, but sometimes, they reach dead ends despite their determined attempts. We cannot forget the demonstration held by the students of the Sacrés Coeurs School in Ain Najm to prevent the installation of high voltage power lines above their school and above many residential districts in Al-Mansouriyyeh town.

The students of the environmental clubs, particularly the members of the Youth Environment Parliament, are making remarkable contributions by detecting environmental problems and communicating them to the officials through an environmental hotline called "The Environment on Line". The latter was created by *The Environment & Development* magazine in cooperation with The Middle East Centre for the Transfer of Appropriate Technology (MECTAT) for the purpose of receiving citizens' environmental complaints, verifying their legitimacy, and following them

up with the officials. The Lebanese complain every day about the polluted air they inhale, the polluted water they drink, the food products polluted with pesticides, the noise that gets on their nerves, the quarries that destroy their forests, and the violations of the beach regulations, which prevents them from enjoying the sea. However, these complaints do not produce any solutions. The objective of “The Environment on Line” is to enhance civil society awareness of endangering environmental safety, to develop mechanisms ensuring accountability in order to detect the problems and exert pressure to have them solved. This can be done in cooperation with environmental and civil society organizations operating in different areas.

Parallel to its informational mission, The Environment & Development magazine will keep exerting efforts to mobilize the new generation to do field work, and to promote the role of the youth in environmental decision-making. The youth are the future of the environment in Lebanon.

The Missing Link between Environmental Awareness and Implementation Rami Harfouche*

Introduction

There is a close relationship between throwing garbage out of the car window and letting mountains be eaten up by quarries. The impact of the former conduct on the environment is minor but it is very significant as far as civic engagement is concerned. Such conduct indicates the citizens' disrespect of public property, of other people's comfort, and of their right to cleanliness. Furthermore, quarries have a destructive impact on the environment and indicate the lack of civic engagement exemplified in the infringement of people's right to dispose of natural resources, i.e. the exploitation of public rights to reap personal benefits. By using this approach as a departure point, it can be said that undertaking the task of creating good citizens is closely related to undertaking the task of creating citizens respectful of the environment.

Environmental awareness is not restricted to adopting emotional slogans on loving nature, but rather consists of creating the culture of the good use of resources which is the basis of the national economy, and of respecting other people's right to live a fulfilling life in a modern country that we will

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bequeath to the future generations.

Raising awareness of environmental issues

Over the past years, considerable progress has been made with respect to raising awareness of the concepts of sustainable development and the environment. It has been incorporated in the curricula of all school classes in Lebanon and has drawn the interest of community organizations and NGOs. However, the environmental awareness developed by these campaigns has not evolved into an environmentally responsible conduct at the personal level, nor has it produced the same effect as that developed by similar campaigns mounted in other countries.

Why don't we see a student, a young person, a scout, or any citizen implement what they learned about the environmentally responsible conduct? What are the obstacles? Which institutions are concerned with following up citizens so that they become environmentalists?

Environmental awareness at the individual level is the basis and the first step to be made to ascend the environmental ladder in society, but it needs to be followed by other steps. Yet, it will not induce change in the absence of a proper infrastructure and environmental policies. Here lies the main problem.

In this short presentation, I will examine the roles of schools, families, the media, and civil authorities, in addition to the role of the government in creating environmentally responsible conduct.

1- The role of schools

Scientific concepts on sustainable development and preserving the environment are part of the school curricula, but the problem is that teachers and administrations deal with these concepts as mere parts of subjects, not as a way of life. Teachers, or rather educators, should help incorporate these concepts in all the subjects at each moment and activities of school life, from the classroom to the playground, so that these concepts and habits are consolidated and maintained outside the school, at home, and in social life. The subject of the environment is not independent, but rather a major part of all subjects, and at the heart of citizen upbringing.

It is necessary that our future schools be in good conditions, clean, beautiful, and surrounded by trees and playgrounds. It is also necessary that school principals and teachers attend training sessions on the environment, which enables them to put into practice environmental culture in all areas of school life. This includes:

- Reducing, sorting, and recycling school wastes.
- Rational use of water, power, and fuel for heating.
- Adopting an environmentally responsible civil code of conduct with the students in classes, playgrounds, and corridors.
- Decorating the corridors with paintings and plants.
- Planting trees on different occasions.

Then, schools become integrated tools for the education of citizens respectful of the environment, which optimizes the impact of the curricula and the activities undertaken by the organizations, as the schools become a central pillar of change in society.

2- The role of the family

The family is of paramount importance when it comes to teaching its members the environmentally responsible code of conduct. The lack of environmental awareness on the part of parents and deeply rooted old habits make it difficult for the children to change their conduct and have a positive impact on their environment. However, awareness can consolidate the material learnt by children, which makes the family a model in terms of proper environmental conduct exemplified in the following:

- Sorting wastes at home.
- Reducing water consumption.
- Reducing electricity consumption.
- Using recyclable and biodegradable products, and reducing the use of plastic bags...

These simple modifications in our daily life conduct can have a big impact on the environment, the economy, and citizens in the country.

Involving families can first be achieved by launching awareness

campaigns in the media, and second by creating the social and economic framework that favors the translation of awareness into proper environmental conduct. Both tasks are duties that should be fulfilled by the authorities and governments.

3-The role of the media

The media is an efficient tool of change in society. If we make good use of it in real-life environmental campaigns run in our homes, schools, and associations, we can achieve concrete results. In this regard, the following steps can be made:

- Producing short films that criticize people seeking the damage of the environment; broadcasting these films on TV, and suggesting realistic solutions and model conduct; and involving civil society in the films and urging it to promote them.
- Constantly publicizing the activities of the state apparatuses with respect to law enforcement and punishment of perpetrators of environmental damage.

4- The role of civil authorities

What is meant by civil authorities is the Ministry of the Environment, municipalities, committees, associations, and clubs.

The local civil authorities, particularly the municipalities, are the most

efficient in environmental action, as they are close to citizens and to environmental problems. Consequently, it is important to promote this role by eliminating the legal and legislative obstacles, and by giving them the necessary prerogatives, such as:

- First, decentralization in the management of environmental issues: municipalities as a civil authority, as well as associations and clubs can supervise the enforcement of environmental regulations, in cooperation with the police in their capacity as the military authorities. By giving these prerogatives and financial resources to municipalities, and by enhancing their capacity, we can enable them to play a key role, along with the central authorities, in environmental action.
- Assigning the Ministry of the Environment a pivotal role, making it a ministry of planning par excellence and one that takes precedence over the other ministries, in addition to the establishment of a national council for the environment as an independent body taking care of environmental issues, both points contribute to giving the environment the attention it deserves. In fact, a strong role played by the Ministry of the Environment does not contradict decentralization, but rather completes it. In this regard, we are referring to centralized decision-making and decentralized implementation.

Many steps can be taken, without initiating legal or administrative

reforms, particularly at the level of the municipalities. They include launching street and building beautification initiatives, rationing the use of street lighting, and the possibility of taking tax-related measures to this end.

5-The role of the government

Governments consider that preserving the environment places a burden on the economy and that it is a luxury that only rich nations can afford. Yet, this is a misconception as effective environmental policies should be based the following concepts:

- Environmental deterioration has an economic cost exceeding that of investing in precautionary measures; therefore, avoiding environmental problems remains less costly than repairing the damage they cause.
- Reforming sectors related to resources and environmental services makes these sectors productive and providers of job opportunities and new markets.
- There is no dissociation between the environment and public health.
- Environmental education contributes to building citizenship.

On the basis of these concepts, governments can include environmental policies in the list of priorities by taking the following initiatives:

- Incorporating environmental education and resource conservation in school curricula.
- Creating the legal framework that allows sectors, NGOs, and municipalities to work in the field of the environment. The private sector is not the enemy of the environment or of sustainable development; it can be the engine of this sector, in the event relevant laws, checks, control and the freedom of competition are provided. Thus, the Lebanese state can benefit from individual initiatives once it makes environmental concepts part of the market rules. For instance, the sector of the collection and treatment of solid wastes and the sectors of resources, such as electricity and water need such reforms to achieve growth.
- Adopting specific support policies and tax incentives encourages individuals and the private sector to preserve the environment. We can mention many examples including tax reductions for industries limiting environmental damage; the support of energy-saving household appliances, such as lighting, solar energy, and others; and the reconsideration of car registration fees to encourage the use of energy-saving cars. These incentives do not place an additional financial and administrative burden on the state as the market rules can create new sectors and contribute to changing habits. In the short run, these policies will lower the energy and medical bills paid by the

national economy.

- Putting an end to the policy of condoning infringements (condoning violations of building regulations, tax exemption, condoning the theft of electricity, and others); and ensuring strict law enforcement and punishing violators, as exaggeration on the pretext of the “fait accompli” has created the culture of deception and disrespect for the law, random urbanization probably being one of the most prominent effects of this scourge.

Environmental policies adopted by the state do not hinder economic development; on the contrary, environmental projects can create growth prospects as they make public policies take into consideration citizens’ concerns so that they can lead a better life. These policies represent the socio-economic framework in which environmental reforms can be introduced, while the impact of environmental awareness-raising and civil campaigns can be enhanced.

6- Conclusion

Changing the conduct of every individual in society is the best way to alleviate the effect of group conduct on the environment. It also helps to make environmental regulations observed and useful. On the other hand, we are led to say that the impact of education, awareness and media

campaigns on the conduct of the individual can not be favorable in the absence of the required infrastructure and legislations the citizens consider as created for their own good, for the good of other people, and for the good of one's country. As a result, they will respect them and do not attempt to use tricks to escape them. This infrastructure helps them have an environmentally responsible conduct without the quality of their life being compromised. Then, it is possible to talk about genuine and sustainable development that is based not only on environmental sustainability, but also on the sustainability of socio-economic development

Should we wait for the future generations to see environmental change?
Will our environment survive until then?

Let us make the inculcation of the virtues of citizenship and environmental safeguard a sustainable practice targeting every citizen in all places and all the time.

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The Debate

Roundtable VII was characterized by the variety of participants who included representatives of different sectors concerned with the environment. Their background varies from school principals, to mayors, members of municipal councils, in addition to social activists, members of environmental organizations, representatives of the Green Party, and the clergy.

At first, Ms. Raghida Haddad gave a presentation on ways to promote environmental awareness programs, and making them more attractive to the youth and capable of changing their conduct.

The major recommendations that she formulated revolved around assigning the youth an active role in the program (participation in competitions, the organization of elections, and others); the creation of a framework in which they can see the fruit of their work (publication of a booklet, making a documentary); training the youth in advocacy rather than contenting oneself with raising awareness; and using the media efficiently.

As for the presentation given by Mr. Rami Harfouche, it dealt with the general concept of the environment and the relationship between environmental deterioration on the one hand and public health and economic burden on the other hand. Mr. Harfouche put forward a number

of recommendations on the promotion of environmental education at schools; putting an end to compromises regarding violations of environmental regulations; the need for state support for environmental programs; and introducing new legislations that provide a legal umbrella for the work of environmental organizations.

Regarding the general atmosphere prevailing in the debate, it can be said that it was lively due to the diverse backgrounds and roles of the participants. The debate focused on all the phases of the environmental programs, and thus provoked positive discussions during which different points of view were expressed. The representatives of environmental organizations referred to the difficulties they encounter in their work and discussed some of their successful projects. They emphasized the fact that the environment is an existential matter and that all the youth should strive for its preservation, thus reflecting the opinion of the environmental program organizers. On the other hand, school principals complained about the lack of project follow-up by the associations and about the lack of support from the government and associations for the environmental initiatives launched by schools, thus reflecting the opinion of the party affected by the associations' activities. Mayors and members of municipal councils unanimously agreed that there was a shortage of centralized environmental projects, particularly with respect to waste sorting. They also complained about the locals' objection to the environmental projects

they undertake, and asked for additional awareness-raising campaigns. As for the activists, they tackled the issue of coordination and networking among associations, and underlined the need for sustainable projects. Furthermore, many participants made comments on the wider framework of environmental activities, raised the issue of the media and its role, questioned the prevalence of the perception of citizenship, and underlined the need to develop coordination and networking among the associations.

The participants concerned with educational issues made some comments. Mr. Salah Abdel Samad, a principal of a private school active in the field of environmental initiatives, highlighted the school support and encouragement of the students' participation in many projects, including the ones organized by *The Environment & Development* magazine. He discussed many initiatives taken by the school, particularly the initiative of planting 400 trees in the framework of the project "A Nursery for Each School", the project of waste sorting (paper), and the development of a comprehensive environmental education curriculum. Abdel Samad complained that most associations do not follow up the participants in the programs once the project is completed, which frustrates and discourages the students, and makes the schools' task tougher.

Mrs. Zakiyya Hajjar, the representative of The Guidance and Awareness Department of the Ministry of Education, discussed the importance of motivating citizens to respect existing laws before considering introducing

new ones. Moreover, she underscored sustainability as a key factor in such programs.

As for Sheikh Sami Aboul Mouna, the member of the General Secretariat of Schools and the representative of Al-Ourfan Schools, he tackled the issue as a clergyman and as an educationalist. He underlined the fact that all religions call for the preservation of the environment, and referred to the major role played by religious institutions in preserving the vast areas of land owned by religious orders, known as Awkaf. He emphasized that the General Secretariat of Schools is concerned about the environment and about improving its conditions. In addition, Sheikh Aboul Mouna suggested devoting one week for the environment, during which seminars and advocacy campaigns would be conducted. He also underlined the need for greater coordination among the concerned ministries so that the latter offer civil society a good example.

Some teachers referred to the donors' role in financing environmental projects, and called for an increase in the prerogatives of The Ministry of the Environment.

Comments were also made by participants other than the representatives of educational institutions, such as the representatives of municipalities who expressed different views. The Mayor of Al-Marj village in the Beka' presented the environmental problems faced by the municipalities, particularly handling solid wastes in the absence of a national plan to deal

with the problem. Another speaker was engineer Mahamoud Derbaj, a member of the Southern Abbasiyya municipality that is benefiting from a grant for the solid wastes program offered by OMSAR that finances a plant for sorting solid wastes in the village. Derbaj thanked OMSAR and the EU for financing the project that solves a problem faced by the entire area. He explained the hurdles faced by the municipality staff and their activities aimed at protecting the environment in the light of a lack of environmental awareness, with the aim of highlighting the importance of such projects. He explained, for instance, how the inhabitants objected to the plant project and placed the responsibility on the municipal council. Derbaj called for the promotion of environmental awareness campaigns so that the municipalities would be encouraged to adopt and complete projects rather than fear people's reaction to such projects.

Social activists also contributed to the debate. Mr. Ziad Nasr stressed the importance of having civil society action complement other activists' in the field of environment as well as in other fields. He called on associations to focus on the activities that go beyond awareness and initiate change. Nasr considered that civil society is more preoccupied with luxury than with meeting basic demands, and criticized some of the approaches adopted by civil society, such as indulgence with the neighborhood (making compromises) and deliberate provocation (criticism without providing the alternative) which prevent civil society from achieving crucial

breakthroughs.

Dr. Oula Hilal raised the question about the parties that protect and support environment activists? She wondered about the donors' priorities and the norms they set to support projects, and expressed her association's readiness to submit a number of projects and suggest solutions to some problems examined during the debate.

As for Rami Kiwan, the Minister of Labor in the Shadow Government and a social activist, he placed the problem of environmental conduct in the general framework of the problem of "the individual in Lebanon", and referred to the lack of positive individual conduct in general. Kiwan suggested drawing a link between environmental deterioration and economic burden to motivate people to protect the environment with a view to saving money. He also suggested using this kind of incentives (positive) as well as disincentives (increasing taxes).

On the other hand, the representatives of environmental organizations having considerable experience and expertise made interesting comments. Mazen Awad, from The Association for Forest Development and Conservation (AFDC) told some success stories relative to the organization and about the individual conduct of environmental activists that can bring about change in their social milieu. He also discussed a number of environmental problems that require immediate intervention, and suggested the creation of an "environmental police" that would monitor the citizens' environmental conduct.

Paul Abi Rached, from the T.E.R.R.E Liban organization and one of the Afkar II Program partners, first discussed the importance of the environment by considering it an existential matter and said that all activists should carry the banner of the environment. Regarding citizenship and environmental conduct, Abi Rached presented the project entitled “The Charter of the Lebanese Pro-Environment Citizen” that sets the environmental code of conduct that every citizen should comply with. Then, he explained the phases of the waste sorting project and how work started with children with a view to achieving change. He also discussed the importance of a practical solution that would complement theoretical awareness-raising done in the projects (such as the existence of a truck to collect the sorted papers to be taken to recycling centers). Abi Rached commented on the success of the project undertaken by the T.E.R.R.E Liban organization whereby the targeted group started to convince the others, as proof that it is convinced of the idea behind the project. In conclusion, he referred to the lack of coordination among organizations and to the need to have cumulative and complementary projects in order to achieve change.

Samir Skaff, the representative of the Green Party and the party secretary, said that the party received a large number of complaints which show serious harm done to the environment. He called for positive thinking, perseverance, and patience, as change of conduct requires a long time.

Mrs Youmna Chacar Ghorayeb, the coordinator of the Afkar Program,

referred to the lack of coordination among organizations, as no real contacts are made among them with the aim of cooperating and sharing. She also discussed the lack of a genuine partnership between the media and civil society (the topic of a previous roundtable) as well as the importance of involving the media in environmental action.

Mrs. Irène Lorfing listed the following obstacles that are hindering the promotion of the organizations' environmental action:

- The small number of volunteers who are ready to give for free, and the inability of organizations to hire people on a permanent basis.
- A serious lack of networking and partnership regarding common environmental issues, both of which are required to form pressure groups capable of advocacy and of bringing about change.
- The prevalence of a spirit of competition and the desire to outdo one another as far as relationships among organizations are concerned, to garner funds in particular, rather than creating a spirit of cooperation and sharing.

The speakers commented on the debates by stressing the importance of having complementary activities and the need to promote coordination among organizations. Ms. Haddad underlined the importance of communication among the concerned parties, and the role of the government, as all civil society initiatives remain imperfect unless they are complemented by governmental cooperation. As for Mr. Harfouche, he

referred to the need to involve the private sector in environmental initiatives.

At the end of the debate, the participants came up with a number of recommendations they had already agreed about. These recommendations are expected to promote the environmental culture and highlight the flaws in this regard with the aim of preserving the environment, and motivating citizens to adopt a positive environmental conduct. The recommendations can be summed up as follows:

- Fostering additional cooperation among relevant ministries so that they become a model to be emulated by civil society.
- The organization of awareness-raising environmental campaigns at the local level that lend support to environmentally committed municipalities and enable them to carry on.
- The promotion of coordination among organizations working on raising environmental awareness, and encouraging them to build additional alliances and advocacy.
- Motivating citizens to respect existing laws before considering introducing new ones.
- Devoting one week for the environment, during which seminars and advocacy campaigns are conducted.
- Emphasizing the relationship between environmental deterioration and economic burden to motivate people to protect the environment with a view to saving money, and using this kind of incentives

(positive) as well as disincentives (increasing taxes).

- The creation of an “environment police” that monitor the citizens’ environmental conduct.
- The dissemination of “The Charter of the Lebanese Pro-Environment Citizen”.
- Involving the media in environmental activities.
- Increasing the prerogatives of the Ministry of the Environment.



**Round
Table 8**

**“Mechwar bi Afkar”
April 29, 2009**

Introduction

Roundtable VIII was held on April 29, 2009 under the title “Mechwar bi Afkar”, “A Trip to Afkar” in the conference room of the Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform (OMSAR). The objective of this seminar was to present the outcome of the Youth Dialogue Day attended by twenty male and female participants aged between 14 and 21, and representing different associations involved in the Afkar Program. The roundtable was led by Ms. Denise Al-Murr who also moderated the debate. Mrs. Youmna Zgheib called on the youth to keep pursuing their dreams and projects despite all the difficulties, to remain united against challenges, and to move ahead. Then, the moderator gave a presentation about the preparations for the Youth Dialogue Day held under the theme “Mechwar bi Afkar”. It was obvious that eleven associations involved in the Afkar II Program share a common characteristic, namely working with the youth.

Thus, the idea of “Mechwar bi Afkar” was born with three main objectives:

- Bringing the youth who participated in the projects together so that they get to know each other and share their experience and expertise.

- Giving them the opportunity to express their needs directly and suggest appropriate solutions.

- Attempting to build a communication network among those people.

After the presentation delivered by Ms. Denise Al-Murr about the activities of the Youth Dialogue Day, three elected young people from the participating group discussed the conclusions reached by the youth. Salman Al-Andari listed the expressed needs, while Cynthia Arrouk spoke about the suggestions made by the youth, and underlined the key role played by the associations in encouraging the youth to express their opinions. In the end, Ra'fat Darazi presented the network established by the youth to maintain communication and to provide them with the tool to voice their opinions.



The Facts and Needs Salman Al-Andari*

The needs underlined by the youth during the Youth Dialogue Day can be summarized as follows:

- Self-development, and particularly the development of communication skills.
- Keeping pace with innovations and the internet.
- Giving a clear definition of citizenship.
- Getting acquainted with all the associations and establishing a network with them.
- Maintaining enthusiasm by motivating the youth, against the decline in the rate of volunteers.
- Using free time to positively develop capacities.
- Enhancing their ability to express their opinions and to get their message across, knowing that a significant portion of the youth does not currently have this capacity.
- Taking into consideration the conditions of the youth with special needs, as they have the right to be integrated in activities.
- Boosting political immunity to enable the youth to challenge strong statements and political problems.
- Integrating the youth from different backgrounds to prevent seclusion

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and promote interaction.

- Reinforcing the sense of affiliation with the association as the youth need more sustainable projects that contribute to the development of the relationship between volunteers and the association.
- Finally, the need to carry out community work in the West Beka' and Baalbeck area, as well as in other disadvantaged areas.



The Ambitions of the Youth

Cynthia Arrouk *

Supporting Lebanese civil society is the pivot of the AFKAR II Program which is funded by the European Union (EU) and managed by the Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform (OMSAR).

As previously confirmed in different ways, dialogue is permanently needed to ensure communication among communities and their development. In this regard our role, as young men and women, consists of asserting ourselves and of proving that we can contribute to the improvement of conditions in Lebanon.

On March 18, twenty-five young men and women from different religious backgrounds and Lebanese areas, aged between fourteen and twenty-one, gathered in Sayyidat of Al-Ber Monastery, Jal El-Dib.

On that day, the young participants were asked to disregard the objectives of their respective associations and to talk about their personal needs and suggestions.

Deep thoughts and hard-line views were expressed by the participants who made the following demands: the improvement of the educational curricula by creating extra-curricular and community activities that boost student self-esteem, and increasing the number of beneficiaries. The

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opportunity that we were given to be involved in the AFKAR II Program should also be available to the largest possible number of young people by adopting variety in the choice of the areas where the workshops are held.

While we were discussing our problems, we noticed that we should find ways to coordinate the different youth projects on the basis of previous experiences. Thus, the obstacles we are facing will dwindle and the level of success achieved by our programs will increase. However, the overall picture cannot be perfect without more extensive media coverage of youth activities with the aim of spreading their views, thereby contributing to an increase in the number of their supporters.

The youth considered that the role of associations and clubs should be strengthened in the most disadvantaged areas and remote villages, such as the West Beka'. In fact, many young people have the required competences but they lack the adequate tools and projects.

While we were collecting the suggestions, many participants called on the associations to follow up the youth in more interrelated programs to consolidate the relationship between the associations and the volunteers working for them, and to maintain their enthusiasm, energy, and desire to carry on.

This strong desire to preserve the Lebanon we know is worthless in comparison with the resolve we will acquire if we get to know all of Lebanon. For this reason, we should familiarize the youth with the different

Lebanese areas through youth outreach workshops and camps. It is also necessary to change the foreigners' perception of Lebanon and its people. We are not terrorists and nor is Lebanon a battle field. Lebanon is deeply-rooted in history and we represent this heritage by developing ambitious projects that should be promoted overseas by pairing with foreign groups, associations, and municipalities in order to present a positive image of Lebanon.

Our suggestions involve all the youth; therefore, the projects to be designed should include the youth with special needs. Our Lebanon is theirs and our problems are theirs. The same way we want to share in determining our destiny and building our future, we should give them the same opportunity.

The main decision or suggestion we made has to do with training the youth in project proposal drafting. This enables them to share in designing, planning, and carrying out the activities of the association. It also allows them to plan and implement future projects without going back to the associations.

At the end, some topics were suggested for AFKAR III, the most important being racial discrimination, ruins, the environment, sports, arts, women's rights, and interfaith dialogue.

Activating Communication Networks

Ra'fat Al-Darazi*

The participants contributed, at the end of the workshop, to determining the priorities to activate the communication networks between the members on the one hand, and between the members and the administration of each association on the other hand. The methods of communication were divided into the following categories:

The first category, or top priorities, includes the following methods: the Facebook, MSN, and the distribution of a list of names and phone numbers. The methods began to be used whereby the list of names was distributed to the participants and a Facebook group was formed under the name “Meshwar bi Afkar”.

The second category in the permanent communication network includes target-oriented entertaining outings that can bring together young people from different AFKAR projects, which contributes to making friendships and acquaintances with people from different backgrounds.

The third category of priorities aimed at reinforcing this spider web includes an annual youth meeting in a festival organized in Beirut, the capital, where all youth associations are invited to present their yearly achievements. This event gives the youth the opportunity to learn about

* *Activist in A Step Away (ASA)*

the activities of other associations.

The fourth category focuses on the organization of a meeting for all the youth participating in the Afkar projects, either in a workshop or through networking of the websites of the associations funded by Afkar by connecting the links as each Afkar project has a webpage of its own.

The last category of priorities suggests a meeting for the young volunteers working in the framework of Afkar, once every three months.

Such methods ensure laying the foundations of continuous communication among the youth in an attempt to achieve integration and solidarity.



The Debate

After the three presentations, the moderator opened the debate, thus allowing the representatives of associations to express their opinions about what the youth said. The debate revolved around the following points:

Feedback

The participants were impressed with the ideas put forward and described them as “comprehensive”, “exciting” and “encouraging”, in addition to reflecting a good background.

Mrs. Faten Abu Shakra, the representative of the Kafa Association, was impressed with the suggested ideas. She wished that the youth projects would include crucial issues such as domestic violence targeting women and children, unfair laws, and gender discrimination. She said that Kafa was working on the establishment of a network of young students at all universities with the aim of involving them in women’s issues. She called on the youth to participate in this campaign by making the network they created join it.

In response to the youth excitement, Mr. Fadi Abi Allam, the representative of the Permanent Peace Movement (PPM), suggested the idea of conducting a one-day workshop for the youth to propose ideas on

projects that are of interest to them. Then, they could be trained in drafting project proposals so as to share afterwards in report writing. He suggested that the reports produced be submitted to AFKAR III, as a sign of commitment by the PPM to the ideas expressed by the youth.

Mrs. Rachel Mallah, the representative of the Mouvement Social, welcomed the idea and suggested that each association hold a similar meeting with the young beneficiaries and volunteers to involve them in decision-making. She said that most associations grant the volunteers membership in the administrative committee after many years of volunteer service. She added saying they should be aware of this right and exercise it. She also drew the participants' attention to the need to inform the youth about the previous achievements of the associations in order to avoid work duplication.

Requests for clarifications

During the debate requests were made for clarifications we believe are worth mentioning in this regard. Mrs. Abu Shakra, the representative of Kafa, asked for a clarification of the expression "political immunity". Salman Al-Andari explained that it means acquiring the ability to take part in open discussions on political issues, rather than evading and avoiding them. What matters is to develop a political culture, the prelude to critical thinking and to tolerating different people.

On the other hand, Mrs. Arwa Hallawi, the representative of the Lebanese Autism Society, inquired about the time needed by the youth to reach and attract peers from different backgrounds. Cynthia Arrouk replied by saying that they face three types of individuals: enthusiastic volunteers, people who have no clue about the issue, and hesitant people. She said that the last category is the most difficult to convince because they usually look for paid jobs.

Volunteerism

Cynthia Arrouk underlined the need to motivate the youth to become volunteers, thus sparking a discussion on this point in particular. Ayman Dandach, a volunteer in the Mouvement Social, referred to the existence of a real volunteerism problem in Lebanon. Mr. Richard Bteich, the representative of A Step Away (ASA), emphasized this issue and referred to the crisis of volunteerism at the level of conviction and practice in Lebanon. This leads to ambiguity while the current school curricula do not contribute to raising youth awareness of this issue. After high school graduation, the youth face a twofold problem: the pressure created by university studies and by financial need, which causes hesitation on the part of people with strong affiliations.

Mr. Bteich said in this regard that the associations are responsible for ensuring work continuity for the youth. Therefore, A Step Away (ASA)

looks forward not just to get ideas from the youth, but also to make the project theirs. Thus, they can carry out the work of the association after they are trained to become part of this cadre.

In reply to the reference made by Ms. Denise Al-Murr to the long time separating youth meetings and its impact on affiliation, Mr. Bteich said that this is an organizational problem but it deserves serious diagnosis so as to be solved at a later stage.

Mrs. Rachel Mallah, the representative of the Mouvement Social, indicated that the concept of volunteerism is ambiguous, not only for the youth, but also for the associations themselves. Each association has its own perception of this issue and the volunteers' role is not clearly defined. "Is he/she a tool to provide a service, or a target expected to train successful volunteers?" In her opinion, the clarification of this issue enables the associations to ensure continuity, to increasingly motivate the youth by providing them with psychological reward, and by setting a clear and professional management plan.

Mrs. Denise Al-Murr reminded the participants of the issue of training in volunteerism organized in the framework of AFKAR II.

Challenges

During the discussions, the difficulties faced by the young participants were underlined, along with the potential obstacles preventing them from making

their voices heard. Regarding the dialogue process in “Mechwar bi Afkar”, moderator Denise Al-Murr said that the youth first found it hard to talk about themselves in their personal capacity, and not as people affiliated with a specific association.

Mr. Jad Tamer, a dialogue moderator of the Youth Dialogue Day, said that the youth meeting and engagement in dialogue is not a common or traditional process; therefore, efforts should be made towards supporting this exercise. He said that the youth would in time, have a greater ability to engage in deeper dialogue and to express deeper needs than the ones that surfaced the first time.

As for Rachel Mallah from the Mouvement Social, she said that associations sometimes underestimate ongoing communication with the youth. Yet, she urged the latter not to despair, to follow up matters by themselves, and to ask for information when it is not automatically made available to them.

Finally, volunteer Ayman Dandach said that associations sometimes take easy options, rather than attempting to meet the real needs so as to ensure the success of the projects. This question poses a challenge to the associations’ work on satisfying youth needs and demands.

Future trends

The debate indicated future trends suggested by the associations. Mr. Bteich

expressed the need to benefit in AFQAR III from these lessons. Ms. Denise Al-Murr explained that AFQAR III may be considered as a starting point. She said that we heard the beneficiaries' voice for the first time and we should build on this. Regarding the issue of training the youth in writing project proposals, she suggested that interested associations meet to plan for common training.

Emphasizing the importance of this issue, Mr. Fadi Abi Allam from the Permanent Peace Movement talked about a project implemented in Baalbeck-Hermel, whereby after training, the youth managed to establish three associations. Consequently, this success story should be a source of inspiration while at the same time it highlights the youth potential.

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that when we asked the youth if they considered themselves as fortunate elite, they said that they were indeed lucky to participate in social work and communicate their ideas. However, they said they were working on expanding the "privileged youth" category to include the largest possible number of peers, through the establishment of communication networks. The youth do not depend on the associations in this endeavor, but they are rather seeking, with personal efforts, to take initiatives and widen their horizons.

They expressed a strong belief in their capacities, when Raafat Al-Darazi, for instance, spoke of their attempt to raise Lebanon to higher standards: "We are seeking to raise Lebanon to higher standards so that it

becomes better, even better than Switzerland, not just to be the Switzerland of the East...” For his part, Salman Al-Andari said: “We have a big responsibility and we are seeking change. We will certainly be part of this change. If we take the required material, we can transform it into energy; we can build a workshop and turn it into a big building to bring about change...”



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