

Newsletter



SAINT JOSEPH UNIVERSITY

July 2006

The war in Lebanon: The social commitment of Saint Joseph University

During these drastic days, Saint Joseph University's duty was to assist the miserable and the needy. The following passages were put together to give an insight of the degree of this involvement. These texts do not cover everything that is being done, but far from that: alumni, students, professors, and personnel all have contributed in lending out a hand. However, the pooling of the efforts of our community has appeared useful to us.

Although it is hard for us these days to determine what awaits our broken country: we can at least say that we are not passive observers. It is that which gives us hope for tomorrow.

*René Chamussy s.j.
Rector*

Campus of Saint Joseph University in South Lebanon

In 1977, Saint Joseph University created a campus, which provided, in addition to its role in teaching, shelter and aid for locals during the difficult times.

In June 1982, during the Israeli invasion, the SJU center of Kfar Falous welcomed hundreds of residents who fled the bombardments of the city. At the time, Father Roger Cuzon dedicated his time to assure the needs of the refugees who were too afraid to go out during the first days of occupation, and was involved with sending back home all foreign members of staff. During the "mountain war" in 83-84, the Bramieh Center opened its doors twice to shelter first the refugees coming from Deir el Kamar, and then a second time those coming from Iklim el Kharroub.

In April-May 1996, due to the abundance of the habitants south of Litani which were fleeing their homes: the Bramieh Center welcomed over 400 people. Food, mattresses, and covers were provided by public and private organizations, however; other more private needs were provided by the Rectorate's financial contribution as well as funds organized by social service in all Beirut campuses.

Ten years later, the same tragedy hits thousands of refugees who turn up at the Saida campus. Three floors are granted to shelter over 400 refugees of all age groups. Volunteers coming from charities and members of the personnel at the Center pitch in to help as much as possible regardless of the modest means available in the city due to the blockade imposed on the country.

Institute of Business Administration

After a request for help by the "Offre Joie" association, to St. Joseph University through Mr. Melhem Khalaf, a member of Faculty at SJU, the Institute of Business Administration (IGE) assembled a group of voluntary workers under the supervision of Maroun Chedid, Joseph Yamine and Kamil Beloot who are all teachers at the IGE.

The team which is essentially composed of hotel management students is in charge of cooking over 1500 daily meals in the kitchen laboratory of the IGE destined to feed displaced refugees after the events of July 12th, 2006.

Following the ingredients given by the "Offre Joie" association, and under the supervision of chefs in the teaching body as well as volunteering chefs, the students are capable of preparing the meals. The system established enables a delivery of over 1500 hot meals at fixed hours on a daily basis that are later distributed to the lodging centers by members of "Offre Joie".

Center of community and family health

Based on the mission of the center to provide health services to the community and being concerned by the national problems, the staff of the center decided to assist the displaced persons in the locations close to the center according to the skills and resources of its staff.

Four types of actions were chosen:

- 1- Mobile teams composed of a doctor and a nurse for health care and vaccination in the displaced persons gathering (two teams and three schools chosen, a schedule for the next two weeks is in place).
- 2- Training the Red Cross volunteers and the other volunteers to the hygiene prevention measures in the gathering locations (lace, diarrhea, prevention measures,...). A first group of thirty volunteers were trained and other groups are expected in the next fortnight.
- 3- Information sessions in hygiene for children and mothers in the gathering locations through posters and flyers.
- 4- Sessions of mental hygiene for mothers, children and youngsters from the displaced population and volunteers working with them.

Social service

Beirut

The social service has sent the social worker Nora Daccache to the Ministry of social affairs to assist in the following fields:

- Census of the centers sheltering the displaced population
- Facilities available in the centers
- Coordination of the actions performed in the centers
- Allocation of volunteers to the centers
- Training of volunteers

Saida

The local social worker is motivating the students living next to centers sheltering the displaced population to assist them according to their skills and resources.

- The social service is in contact with students that expressed the wish to assist the displaced population to inform them about the closest center to their home.
- The social service is available on the campuses to assist students seeking help.
- The social service is looking after the foreign students, mainly the Africans who are still in Beirut.

Lebanese Institute for educators

Social and educational activities in favor of displaced children. The volunteer students from the Institute are active in several centers and schools where the displaced persons from South Lebanon have been brought. The volunteers are proposing sport and cultural activities, drawing and theater workshops, story telling, to keep the students busy and allow them to escape the sad environment and express their sufferings and worries. 18 students from the second and third year are involved in greater Beirut and Mount Lebanon, 11 students are working with the children in schools in North Lebanon. A request for educational material was submitted to the emergency unit of the Middle East Churches Council to facilitate our students' actions and enrich their work. All the actions are performed in coordination with the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Hotel Dieu de France Hospital

1-The priority is given to the war situation scenarios: flow of injured persons, interruption of supplies, and partial destruction of the hospital facilities. A crisis committee identified the possible risks, their impact and the prevention actions.
2-During the first week of the war, the hospital has sent resident MDs to the gathering centers of displaced persons to offer first aid care.
3-The hospital reactivated the polyclinic to receive the displaced persons with health problems, offer a diagnosis service and supply them with the right drugs.
The hospital received a batch of medicines from France as a grant, sorted them, a few medicines for hospital use and most of the batch will be used for the polyclinic health service.
4-The hospital treated a few injured persons: a soldier from Kfarshima, three injuries from south Lebanon, a patient transferred from Bahman hospital.

Saint Joseph University Residence

Kathelijne, Philippe, Boutheina, Christopher, Monica, Fokko, Ahmad,...students of all nationalities coming from different parts of the world to pursue their studies in History, Politics, Arabic...These students had all chosen to stay at the SJU Residence. The war begins. The first day passes and then the second and the third...Once the period of shock dissolves, the students and the administration start facing the new facts. Several rooms which were reserved for students during August are available to accommodate the habitants of the south who were awaiting their evacuation to neighboring countries or who were to be taken to safer regions. The first family to arrive: Hassan, Abdallah (7yrs), and Diana (4yrs). Then a second: Wael, Armella Dominique, Hassan Pascale, Rim (8yrs), Elena (4yrs) and Sabine (2yrs)... The residence originally destined for students is occupied by several families which include many children. A new lifestyle is imposed. The students' reaction was spectacular and beyond any expectation. Their dedication has been stronger than any member of the administration or the Residence. Drapes and towels are exchanged, food and drinks are distributed, clothes are given out, and activities are organized:

Kassem, Ihab, Marie, and Guy are all in charge of the children; Ervin, David, Celia, and Gaelle have all been assisted in the refugee centers; Emmanuel, Noor, and Nienke have been helping and comforting all arriving refugees in this difficult moment. Helene, Roula, and André as well as the rest of the team have given up on all their free time to make sure that nothing is missing. The list of contributors is very long, and this without mentioning other USJ employees especially supervisors of all age groups who with their devotion have motivated all the others. Our first concern was to ensure basic life conditions: hot and cold water, electricity, cooking gas, daily cleaning as well as good hygiene standards. All the resources of the Residence have been put to everyone's service. The drycleaners and dryers are working almost 24h/24. In the kitchen, European dishes are mixing with traditional food... And everywhere resides a discrete supervising presence to intervene at the right time and to give the appropriate advice in order to avoid any damage. Of course, in the presence of such a heterogeneous mixture, continuous supervision is needed to ensure the well-being and safety of all parties.

VOLUNTEERS

The Campus of Human Sciences is the warehouse for «Offre joie». Foodstuff must be divided into portions and packaged for distribution to displaced families. Those who wish to volunteer are asked to get in touch with the office of social services at the University or to go directly to the Campus. Work is being carried out in the entrance lobby each day from morning till evening Contact us at 01-421000

Lebanese School of Social Education and the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences

Mrs. May Hazaz, director of the Lebanese school of social education, who attended the work reunion on the 24th of July at the Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA), volunteered to ensure complete coordination between the ministry and all groups of professions: social assistants, social animators, and specialized educators dispersed in Beirut, Metn, Kesrouan, Jbeil, and North Lebanon. A first list of volunteers has been submitted to the MAS; a second list of 60 volunteers, psychologists and students is being prepared with Mrs. Zeina Mehanna of ELFS, Zalfa Mehanna and Chantale Mansour from the Faculty of Human Sciences. A third list of volunteering social assistants is being worked on with Mrs. Zeina Madi, president of the Association of social assistants; a fourth list of volunteers grouping social animators and specialized educators (professionals and students) is also being prepared with the representatives of the syndicate, the association and Miss Zeina Dib.

However, after several calls on the ground in the centers accommodating the refugees, Mrs. May Hazaz noted that all former and current students of the Lebanese school of social education: both social workers and specialized educators were already committed as trainees or had been recruited to work in various NGOs, and were now working in coordination with the MSA, with the Lebanese Red Cross, Caritas Lebanon, St Vincent de Paul, World Vision, AJEM, AFEL, Oum El Nour, Mission de Vie, as well as UNICEF and other neighboring centers. In parallel Mrs. Samira Baghdadi and Mrs. Vivianne Zeidan who are both responsible of the ELFS at North Lebanon campus worked and coordinated their actions with the Tripoli municipality and present NGOs to assist the displaced in the Northern Lebanon region.

It is worth noting that following the meeting of the MSA, centered on "The prevention of traumatic experiences in children", several guidelines were given to professionals and volunteers dealing with children and their parents:

1. Priority should be given to recreational activities using painting, arts and crafts, theater, and reading as a means of expression

2. According to the psychoanalyst present (Dr. Elie Karam, Dr. Chawki Azouri, Dr. Mirna Ghannage, Dr. Marie-Therese Khair Badawi...), direct interventions with traumatized children should be avoided, as they may cause more harm than good especially in such unstable circumstances

3. According to research undertaken by the IDRAC on post-war trauma, and studies led by Dr. Mirna Ghannage in Southern Lebanon as well as according to the expertise which social workers acquired during the Lebanese war (1975-1990), all evidence points at the fact that it is not important for children to talk about their experiences at this stage, and counseling sessions should not be held, as the child will not have the required level of concentration. What should be done is to show availability and support for parents as it is they who will provide the safety and trust required in these times of great disruption. A list of social workers, psychoanalysts, and educators residing in the different Lebanese regions made available to the MSA could help in this sense.

4. A sub-committee was put in place to help coordinate efforts between the MSA, UNICEF, and university representatives

5. The creation of a hotline was agreed upon

6. Training workshops on emergency social work were proposed, whereby the continuous education department at the ELFS can handle such types of training in coordination with UNICEF

7. A list of useful phone numbers was published:

- The Higher Relief Commission

Tel: 01-985880

Fax: 01-985884

- Dr. Elie Michael (CSE) Tel: 03-286559

- Mrs. May Hazaz (ELFS) Tel: 03-898132

09-231154

Fax: 01-614048

- Mrs. Trish Hiddleston (UNICEF)

Email: thiddleston@unicef.org

- Mrs. Amal Obeid

Tel: 03-444433

Institute of political science

Starting the first days of the aggression, faculty and students from the Institute of Political Science (IPS) have taken action to support Lebanon through the media, politics, and by providing humanitarian aid.

Due to the wide consequences of the aggression against Lebanon, and after numerous debates, efforts have been exerted in 3 directions:

1. Several students have caught up with the media, especially journalists sent by international media to cover the events. Some students from IPS are already working in teams with numerous foreign and Arab journalists.

2. Another major part of the students has joined humanitarian organizations and are working to assist the refugees.

3. Faculty members as well as students have been associated with other university students' initiative to prepare two appeals concerning:

- Israel's violation of the International Convention of Geneva (1949) that ensures the protection of civilians during war.

- The deliberate economic losses that have attained infrastructure, economic enterprises, as well as civilians.

The different groups have been in contact and exchange information over the three domains of intervention.