

Beirut December 12, 2024

Nahla Ghandour

War in Southern Lebanon & Gaza continued as we were ending the working. In mid-July 2024, we closed the training sessions for parents and both parents and children started their Summer vacation.

At that time, we started the major renovation for the Preschool. We have received a 12,000 \$ support from Welfare Association- Lebanon for this task. By that time, we had already wrapped and stored all materials (therapeutic & Educational) and furniture.

The contractor started, with his workers, preparing for the start. As the contractor surveyed the center, we allocated all places, on walls and roofs, where humidity had seeped through. The humidity also rusted the iron, and we had to rebuild some places from zero level.

As the work resumed, we discovered, more and more damage, and took the decision to renovate properly since we already started. The major problems, was finding the needed financial support to go on.

Friends in Switzerland gave their consent to use their quarterly donations to finalize the renovation.

At this period, the administration, was working on the children's evaluation cards, and issuing the final annual reports for the children. At the end, we handed all reports to parents, as well as finalized the Annual Evaluative Report of the Preschool.

This report was sent, via email, to all funding agencies and friends, and stockholders. (I doubt anyone, at that time read the report, war was still going on violently. But at least another task was finished in spite of war.

During this period, the administration, worked on editing the information prepared, by the Preschool's staff, for the Parents Workshop (which we did not conduct). We prepared 3 booklets of the Title "Nutrition & Disability": 1. Healthy Diet, Digestive System (muscles, functions, disorders), & Oral cavity (musculature, function, and dental Hygiene).

There remains 2 other booklets, to finalize the series of 5. We are currently trying to fund raise for it.

At the end of September, the booklets were published. We will distribute them to the parents, after we start the next year (if there was a cease fire).

At the same time, other staff, were working on family & children intervention.

Originally, we are not involved in emergency relief, we are a non-profit Early Childhood Education & Habilitation NGO. But we always keep in mind the welfare of our children and their families.

Two staff members worked intensively, a Special Educator and the Clinical Psychologist.

Our Special Educator, lives in the camp, and represent the Habilitation Preschool in the network of organizations working there/

At the beginning of the war, in October 7, 2023, a lot of Families, from Southern Lebanon, were displaced to different cities and camps of Lebanon. There were a lot of families who took Mar Elias Palestinian Refugee Camp as their residence. Different relief organizations worked with the people providing them with daily life necessities. Food, shelter, clothing, water. Other organizations worked with the children of these families, & psycho-social support with adults and children. All these personnel worked on voluntary bases. These volunteers executed recreational activities (art, music, dance, ...), and our Clinical Psychologist worked in the psycho-social support unit.

First, we contacted all our families. Some, have left to Syria while others were displaced. Some other families, their houses were demolished and had to live with other unrelated displaced families. The houses were small, full of adults and children.

We gathered data on the needs of these families, and provided their address and information to NGOs working in relief.

Families were sometimes desperate, not only from the war situation, but from the behavioral problems the children developed. For example, a child with Autism is known to stick to routine, hate change, have communication problems with other members of the family and the community. So, moving this child from his environment, & putting him/her in close proximity with other people is traumatic. The list of maladaptive behavior ranged from, temper tantrums, aggressivity, self- harm, hyperactivity, and of course fear .

Applying techniques to elevate these problems proved to be extremely difficult. The parents could not change the surroundings and conditions they are living in.

Parents were extremely grateful for our follow-up, and some even sent voice messages:

**The Mother of Rital:** I want to begin by thanking you, as a mother, from the bottom of my heart. when you called to inquire about us, your concern, and your willingness to help in ways possible for you. Your act is unique, it's a scarcity among people we know these days. You are our mother, sister, friend, doctor. you are our idol, we love you and very proud of you. I am happy that during my life time i got to know your center-GKCF, and you. it really touched my heart, when i heard your voice and your concern, as well as trying to manage everything during this war, on a personal level, you inquired about us as well. I hope

you all good to be provided to you by the will of Allah. and may Allah protect you, your family and your children. We love you a lot.

Around 23<sup>rd</sup> of September, war engulfed all cities, town and villages in Lebanon. We stopped all work and tried to be safe and healthy. Some of us were displaced, fleeing from dangerous zones, residing in far villages and in the mountains, where war activities were occasional.

At the beginning of November, we opened our work, three times a week, for individual therapy sessions for the children. War was still on. The families could choose to bring their children or not. We had 15 children registered.

After the cease fire we opened, as usual and started reaching out to parents to come and enroll their children.

It was a tough, violent year, with lot of anxiety, fear, and agony. By mid-February, the cease fire duration will end, and we hope that war won't disrupt again.