



From Seeds of Hope to a Multiplying Mission



Impact Report

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ОСТ2020 | ОСТ2021

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The Arab World sits within the mostly unreached 1040 window – a majority Muslim region without freedom of religion. Lebanon has long been a stronghold of Christian faith and light in the region.

Lebanon's current financial depression, exacerbated by the refugee crisis and the Beirut port explosion, has moved the country from a beacon of hope to one of hopelessness. 78% of the population now lives under the poverty line. In reaction to widespread scarcities, those with the means to leave, especially Christians, are emigrating en masse.

The needs keep growing, but the laborers are shrinking.

The LSESD and MEBO family of ministries have stayed on the course for decades through both war and social upheaval. No matter the circumstances, our mission is clear – strengthen the Church and serve local communities with the unconditional and practical love of Christ. This is why each ministry has expanded its programs this year to address new and emergent needs resulting from the sharp economic decline. In the following pages, we'll demonstrate how programs within each focus area – Equipping the Church, Relief & Development, and Inclusive Education – have adapted and multiplied to meet each new crisis.

It is at this time, perhaps more than ever, that most people are looking for hope. Thank you to our faithful partners and friends who have sustained us during this crisis.

Together, we are here for such a time as this.

Dr. Nabil Costa

Chief Executive Officer | LSESD

Dr. Carolyn Bishop Board Chairperson | MEBO

Carly & Bishop

LEBANON A Year In Review

2020 October

Lebanon's currency continues its downward spiral, losing more than 90% of its value as FINANCIAL MELTDOWN deepens





The Special Tribunal for Lebanon issues a LIFE SENTENCE to Hezbollah militant Salim Ayyash for taking part in the 2005 assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri

DECEMBER

A WORLD BANK report qualifies the crisis in Lebanon as a "deliberate depression" due to policy inaction, corruption, and political arrangements that benefit the few





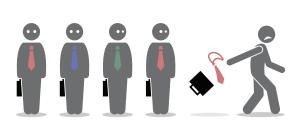
2021



PROTESTS and **CLASHES** in Tripoli erupt against nationwide COVID-19 lockdown measures and precarious living conditions



Lebanese **PRIME MINISTER** Saad Hariri **RESIGNS** from his position, further deepening the country's political crisis





AR ANNIVERSARY of the 20

Lebanon marks the ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY of the 2020 BEIRUT EXPLOSION that killed more than 215 and injured more than 7,000 people. The investigation into the explosion is still on-going with little progress made due to pressure and meddling by the incumbent political class



Massive **FUEL SHORTAGES** lead to clashes at petrol stations, 6-hour long queues and to the crippling of vital sectors of the economy



AUGUST

At least 20 people killed and more than 7 injured after an ILLEGAL FUEL TANKER EXPLODED in Akkar District





More than one year after the resignation of the previous government following the Beirut Port Explosion and months of political deadlock, a **NEW CABINET** is finally formed



SEPTEMBER

Lebanon experiences frequent power outages due to fuel shortages. The country's two largest power stations shut down resulting in a nationwide **POWER CUT**



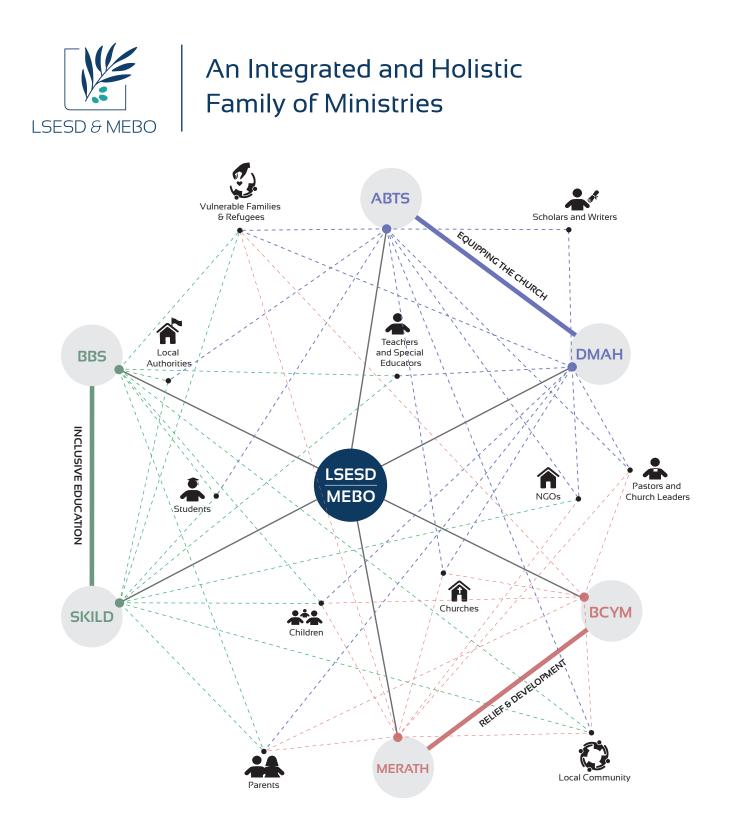




Deadly **CLASHES** erupt in the heart of Beirut between Hezbollah militants and rival political parties as a result of discord over the investigation of the Beirut Port Explosion

Sources available upon request





EQUIPPING THE CHURCH

ABTS | Arab Baptist Theological Seminary DMAH | Dar Manhal Al Hayat (Publication House)

RELIEF & DEVELOPMENT

BCYM | Baptist Children & Youth Ministry MERATH | Middle East Revive & Thrive (Relief)

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

BBS | Beirut Baptist School SKILD Center | Smart Kids with Individual Learning Difficulties LSESD has a holistic approach to ministry that combines the demonstration and the proclamation of the gospel. As explained by the Micah Declaration on Integral Mission: "If we ignore the world we betray the word of God, which sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore the word of God, we have nothing to bring to the world".

MEBO exists to serve as the US fiscal sponsor and a bridge of support from global believers to LSESD.



EQUIPPING THE CHURCH







A New Strategic Direction

The mission of ABTS is to serve the Church in our region as it accomplishes its Biblical mission of having Christ acknowledged as Lord by offering specialized learning resources and equipping faithful men and women for effective service

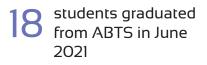
The Lord has been good, providing guidance for the continuity of the ministry despite the challenges that Lebanon is going through. In the words of ABTS President, Elie Haddad, "We are learning precious lessons during these days of hardship, too numerous to mention here. The most important, perhaps, is that our curricula, our approaches, our delivery, even our outcomes, must be dynamic and ever-changing in response to what God is teaching us about Himself and His actions in our world."

This past year, ABTS experienced a lot of changes and growth as the ministry committed to the New Strategic Direction that seeks to better serve the Church and meet the arising needs in the region. Through the hybrid Integrated Theology Program, ABTS has been able to reach a new diversity of key Arab Church leaders and ministers in their own ministerial contexts. The Online Certificate in Ministry grew to provide flexible theological education to 180 students. ABTS has also been able to serve several congregations of Lebanese churches with non-formal training sessions through their peacemaking work that is focusing on nurturing a culture of peacemaking starting with local churches. The ministry has also begun work on a first of its kind Arabic-language digital theological library in collaboration with <u>MENATE</u> that will serve seminaries in the entire region.

Praise be to God for all that he enabled ABTS to do during this past year, and for teaching ABTS that, time after time, through every difficulty, He provides an opportunity for the gospel to make a change.







240 students enrolled in the various formal programs

>158 participants joined virtually for Middle East Consultation 2021

> new groups started in 6 Sudan and Lebanon for Khebz w Meleh

>1000 victims of the Beirut love of Christ through partnership with several churches

> training courses held by the Peacemaking team for various churches and for ABTS staff and faculty

170 people reached by the Peacemabing trainings Peacemaking trainings



Khebz w Meleh Participant in Sudan

I got close to the people I never thought I would befriend, and it happened within a very short period. I felt as if I had known them for a long time. I am so thankful that you gave me the opportunity to take part in such a program.



Arab Participant of the Middle East Consultation 2021

"The Consultation helped me understand how important it is that we seek to become dynamic churches and dynamic church ministers. I learned that we need not only to reach out to others with the good news, but to also disciple them and help them become disciples of the Lord who can prepare other disciples."

ABTS Syrian Student Yaser

"When I understood how the Lord was merciful, I learned that I needed to be merciful and reach out lovingly to the people I interact with. This has deeply helped me minister better within my context. The more I serve, the more my vision for ministry is maturing. I want to start a ministry that specifically serves people who are differently abled. I also want to serve new believers who come from non-Christian backgrounds by simplifying theology so that it is more approachable for them."





Resourcing the Church

Dar Manhal Al Hayat (DMAH) is a Christian publishing house with a mission to equip and encourage the Arabic speaking Church to live a Gospel-shaped life amongst Arabic communities through Christian and educational resources.

The past two years—marked by COVID-19, political instability, and economic collapse—have had a devastating impact on the country. People are tired and weary, beaten down by the worries and cares of life. This includes the DMAH staff, who have continued to labor in their work despite personal challenges and national uncertainty.

But as a Christian publishing house, the crises the team has experienced—and are still experiencing— have increased their commitment to the mission that the Lord has entrusted DMAH with – a mission to equip and encourage believers, and share hope in Christ, through the publication and distribution of Christian resources in the Arabic language. More than ever, this past year has strengthened the belief that all people need to know that there is a good and gracious God. After the port explosion last August, DMAH freely distributed thousands of copies of *When Your World Falls Apart*, as well as trauma resources created in collaboration with SKILD, so that people could know that there is hope beyond

the current pain. DMAH also attended several book fairs which allowed the team to share Christian resources throughout the MENA region, including in countries where Christianity has little presence. In collaboration with BCYM, DMAH distributed activity books and stories to Lebanese and Syrian children. Many of the people touched by these resources do not yet know Jesus as their Lord, so please continue to pray that God uses these written words to transform the lives of people.

In addition to sharing hope in Christ, DMAH also sought to build up and equip local believers. The team did this through the distribution of relevant devotional and theological resources to church leaders and congregations across the country. DMAH has also remained committed to a ten-year project of publishing academic and theological books for pastors, students, and seminaries around the MENA region, which includes both translated works and locally written works—the latter which aims to build up the voice and platform of Arab Christians.

Though challenges abound, the team will keep their eyes on God, trusting that He will use the work to bring others to Him, to strengthen believers, and to glorify His name throughout the Arab World.



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- 37 books published
- 37,100 Sold at highly subsidized rates

12,000 children's activity books and Bibles freely distributed

3 book fairs attended

book launching



Testimony of a Book Fair Recipient

At one of our regional bookfairs a woman came to the DMAH booth and shared how she had previously visited the booth at a 2019 fair, where she received an Arabic Bible. A few months before that bookfair, her father had passed away and she was still struggling with the grief of his loss. That night, after returning from the bookfair, she awoke at 3am and was unable to fall asleep again because of her sorrow. Not knowing why, she decided to open her Bible. Instantly her eye caught a verse: "Come to me all who are weak and weary, and I will give you rest." In that moment she was overcome with a deep sense of peace and comfort. She has continued to read the Bible, which remains a source of comfort and hope for her, and which has led her to become a Christ-follower! As she shared with our attendant, "I am now a believer waiting to be baptized."



Naji Gideon, Sales and Production Director of DMAH

"The beauty of bookfairs is the non-threatening environment for discussion and debate. While many of the guests would never imagine entering a church, the booth provides a safe and open space to ask questions and explore resources about the Christian faith."



RELIEF & DEVELOPMENT -



Our Help Comes from the Lord

Middle East Revive & Thrive (MERATH) comes alongside local churches and faith-based organizations to help them implement relief and development projects for vulnerable individuals and families in Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq, in basic needs, education, child protection, and livelihoods and recovery.

During the past year, the economic and social crises in Lebanon have spiraled out of control. The local currency accelerated its free fall, while shortages and rationing of fuel, electricity, and medicine drove people to more despair, anger, and hopelessness. The situation is not better in Syria, where a conflict dragging for ten years, international sanctions, and the ripple effect of the Lebanese crises have had terrible consequences.

These compounding crises have created a daily evolving environment that required constant adaptation and creativity to overcome many logistical hurdles, such as banking restrictions, gas and electricity shortages, and lockdowns. These overwhelming humanitarian needs and increased workload have led to fatigue and stress on the team and MERATH's church partners.

Despite all the challenges and thanks to the responsiveness and vision of our church partners, MERATH has been able to scale up the level of assistance provided, serving an additional 40,000 people as compared to the previous year. The strength of their network of local partners enabled them to respond to the COVID-19 crisis and the Beirut blast in a coordinated way, while new partnerships helped them reach more people in more locations and grow their networks. Finally, increased support to preexisting partners helped them reach out to new groups of vulnerable people, such as Lebanese families and migrant workers, on top of Syrian refugees.





110,000 individuals benefited from food assistance 65,000 people received winter items to keep warm 20,000 families provided with diapers, milk, and feminine pads

BASIC NEEDS

30,000 families provided with hygiene kits 1,300 households received

medical assistance

EDUCATION AND CHILD PROTECTION

- 1,450 children enrolled in 8 learning centers in Lebanon
 - 600 children enrolled in 3 child friendly spaces in Syria
- children reached with 2,050 psychosocial support activities and/or counselling

LIVELIHOOD AND **RECOVERY**

- 100,000 masks purchased from 70 seamstresses in 5 sewing groups
 - 200 homes rehabilitated in Beirut and in Syria
 - individuals benefited 560 from agriculture assistance in Syria
 - individuals provided 650 with livestock, poultry, and beehives
 - individuals benefited 250 from small business grants
 - 180 people received financial literacy and business entrepreneurship trainings



Imane, Syrian Refugee in Lebanon

"The increase in food prices is out of this world. But thanks to the voucher we received from the church, I was able to buy many things I couldn't afford anymore. The church also gave us hygiene kits and helped us go through the winter. I try and help other families anytime I can by sharing what I receive, because I know what it is like to have nothing. Lately, there has been a lot of pressure from our Lebanese landlord because we cannot always afford rent. Sometimes he cuts off our water. He brought a lawyer once and wanted to evict us in front of my kids. Little by little, he became more understanding of our situation. He needs money because he was impacted by the crisis in Lebanon. His mother had cancer and he couldn't afford her treatment or the burial fees when she passed away. It was heartbreaking. I introduced him to the church, and they have been helping him. It makes us feel terrible that we cannot pay him the rent we owe him, but we just do not have any money right now."



Father Nicolas, Partner in Southwest Syria

"The relief ministry enhanced the image of the church. It helped us become a lighthouse in our area and strengthened our witness. In very dark circumstances, we pray and work to remain messengers of hope. Sometimes we feel that simply visiting the families is enough to give them some hope. Our presence by itself comforts them. We have no idea what tomorrow holds, and chances are it will keep on getting worse and worse, but we always hope and pray for the best. We need to always keep on smiling. God is good."







Restoring Hope for Children

The Baptist Children and Youth Ministry (BCYM) organizes events and activities for children and youth, including refugees, to reflect God's love to vulnerable children and other groups of society.

BCYM continued the popular Camp in a Box program for children aged 6 to 10, who were socially distanced from their friends and classmates as the pandemic stretches on. Implemented in partnership with local churches, this outreach program enabled discipleship, not just among the affected families, but also with the new church partners. Many of these new church partners were non-evangelical, so this program gave them the opportunity to disciple leaders and guide youth ministries on a broader scale.

Moreover, in follow-up of its ministry with the Home of Hope, BCYM identified a new need among women with whom they had already built a long relationship of trust. After the girls turn 18, their futures are precarious, sometimes involving abusive family or marriage situations. BCYM provided the women with English lessons, online skills classes, rent assistance, and food vouchers on a monthly basis. This fostered both spiritual formation and financial independence, so the women can support their children.

Throughout the year, BCYM continued to reach out to serve Lebanese and Syrian children, their parents, and their siblings to help them cope with their fear and anxiety in the aftermath of war, poverty, and the Beirut port explosion. BCYM works closely with local partner churches to identify those children most in need as well as with sister ministries such as Dar Manhal al Hayat (DMAH) and SKILD. Working with DMAH enables BCYM to remain upto-date when it comes to useful Christian publications addressed to children. By collaborating with SKILD, BCYM has been able to provide children's wellness and psychosocial support.





- 9 programs launched with children and youth
- 21 events hosted for children, families, and youth
- >1000 households impacted across Beirut, the North, the South, the Chouf, and Beqaa through summer Camp in a Box
 - >18 partner churches collaborated with for 2020-2021 programs
 - 7 former Home of Hope residents cared for in new women's program



Recipient of Camp in a Box

"We may not be Christian, but now we know that no matter how hard life could treat us, and how bad our government treats us, we feel more secure as we know that there are kind people like you and a compassionate institution such as the Church."

Church Partner about Camp in a Box

Elias has 2 brothers. With his parents trying to work in the midst of the crisis, summer Camp in a Box, having all the materials needed in each activity, made their life easier. So every day in the afternoon they would sit on the balcony and spend an hour or two doing it.



Gladys Sebali, BCYM Director

"After Nora's [name changed for privacy] time at Home of Hope, she decided not to go back to her abusive family, but instead to get married in order to stay away from them. Nora was in deep depression though. Her marriage was cruel and without income, she was left to care for two children. BCYM was able to send Nora to see a counselor, which significantly helped her come out of her depression. We also provided her and her children with food, clothes, and medical care."



INCLUSIVE EDUCATION -







A Lighthouse in Beirut

Beirut Baptist School (BBS) is an inclusive K-12 Christian school committed to excellent, relevant, and holistic education that cultivates and inspires diverse learners in mind, body, and spirit to become responsible citizens and successful lifelong learnings.

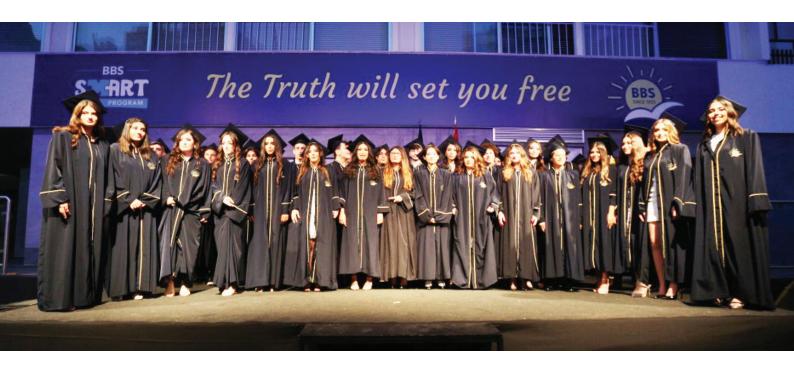
It is no secret that Lebanon is in a state of unprecedented social upheaval. A catastrophic economic collapse, coupled with the adverse effects of COVID-19, has propelled people and institutions across this country into a desperate state of survivalincluding the education sector. On a micro level, staff and students are struggling to regulate the everyday impact of stress and trauma, including its impact on learning and teaching. On a macro level, schools are struggling as they navigate the loss of tuition, astronomical dollar-based operational costs, COVID outbreaks, and the unprecedented loss of teachers due to emigration. These challenges need to be taken seriously and addressed: the survival and success of schools directly impact thousands of students, families, and staff across the country, as well as our country as a whole - which benefits from the education of its children and youth.

By the grace of God, Beirut Baptist School has remained steadfast in its mission of providing excellent, inclusive, and Christian education. The school views this God-given calling as more than transmitting information to students, but rather as shaping students into caring and conscientious people through moral, intellectual, and social formation. Despite the compounding crises of the past year, BBS has continued to creatively and faithfully serve the students and families in its care while maintaining excellent standards in education. As an inclusive Christian school with a majority non-Christian student body, BBS has also recognized the immense opportunity these challenges have brought to bear witness to the sacrificial love of Christ. BBS has sought to do this explicitly, through the messages of the weekly Bible classes and chapel to students, but also implicitly through the holistic support toward the entire BBS community in these dark and uncertain times.

BBS strives to be a bringer of hope. As long as there is the chance for a better future—including quality education for the next generation—hope remains.



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* BBS's SMART Program serves students with learning difficulties and special needs



180 current teachers ϑ staff

356 students receiving financial aid



Parent of a 10th Grade Student

"I have one daughter at BBS and she has been there for 10 years. This has been a hard year for our family with the financial crisis, but also with COVID and online learning. Since my daughter has special needs and learning difficulties, it has been hard to transition online. But I cannot thank the school enough for the scholarship support—without it we could not keep my daughter at the school. We want to keep her there because BBS the school is a special place: it has always supported us financially, emotionally, and academically. The school is always ready to help its families and support its students in social, academic, and psychological ways."



Alice Wazir, Principal

"Over the past few years, we have come to realize that our role as Beirut Baptist School is not only to be an academic institution, but also a community service institution where we are aware of our community's needs and are ready to stand next to them and support them when those needs arise."





Education for All

Smart Kids with Individual Learning Differences (SKILD) is a specialized center whose team strives to see every child in Lebanon and the Middle East recognized for their potential and valued as an integral part of society. Their mission is to bring about an inclusive society by providing individualized support and care for children with learning difficulties. SKILD aims to bring the love of Christ to a marginalized student population, largely misunderstood and rejected by their communities.

This year marked SKILD's 10th year in ministry. Looking back over a decade of achievements, such as advocating for 60 public schools, establishing special education departments across schools in Lebanon, and building the capacities of educators and the community, the SKILD team has witnessed the transformation of special needs in Lebanon from a taboo topic to a challenge that schools and educational institutions are starting to acknowledge.

Parents of children with special needs were also supported and guided to ensure their emotional wellbeing and help them with the rising challenges at home. Through the Parent-to-Parent support group, SIKILD has created a haven for parents and witnessed the transformation of different mothers who were once struggling and are now setting up support units themselves. In summary, SKILD expanded its activities this year to reach the children in their homes, whether they were in isolation or can no longer afford therapy at the centers due to the economic crisis. 105 short and practical videos with activities on different learning challenges in Arabic became available for parents and educators. As a response to the port blast in Beirut which affected thousands of children, SKILD opened a playground for them to release trauma through play and published a self-help booklet for teenagers to help them cope with their anxiety and stress. In collaboration with Notre Dame University (NDU) in Lebanon and Lipscomb University in the US, SKILD established the IDEAL Program: a twoyear certificate program for youth whose learning difficulties prevent them from enrolling in regular classes. The program provides its learners with internship opportunities to enhance their career skills, in addition to strengthening their academic abilities and life and social skills.

This academic year brought about new positive needs as more parents approached our therapists for consultations, assessments, and therapy session. Despite all the difficulties, whether it was the economic collapse, the blast, or the pandemic, we have hope in unlocking the potential of every child regardless of their abilities.







Learning Accommodations Officer at Higher Education

"Mathew and I are only a few years apart. He is a 27-year-old mechanical engineering student diagnosed with Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder. Since the beginning of his academic journey, he has struggled to pass his courses and would only be able to do so after he fails them twice and sometimes 3 times. This repetitive course failure, has taken a stroll on his mental health and caused him to suffer from depression. Mathew came to the Learning Accommodation Office and was ready to give up and leave university. Mathew found hope in knowing that there is a department at his university ready to understand his difficulties and advocate for his need with his instructors. After defining ADHD and explaining its impact on learning, instructors were able to understand the struggles of their student and became more cooperative and willing to help Mathew. It was for the first time in his 9 years at NDU (for a degree that usually takes 5 years to complete) that Mathew passed all his courses during fall semester. Despite the challenges of distance learning, having to adapt to new instructors and manage his time to submit all assignments and projects that replaced examinations, Mathew also passed all his courses and contacted the Learning Accommodations Officer to share his joy and gratitude to all the support.

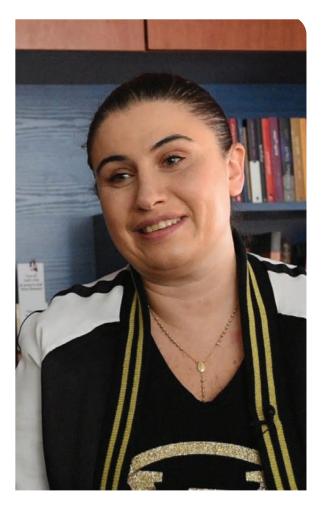


*Names have been changed to protect the beneficiary's privacy.



Anna from the Parent-to-Parent Support Group

Anna, the mother of Vera, a 5-year-old girl with Autism Spectrum Disorder, is now empowered to face her community and advocate for her little girl. Anna reached SKILD to enroll her daughter in the Applied Behavioral Analysis Program for behavior modification, however the team noticed that not only Vera needed support, but also Anna who was depressed and found no way out of her misery. Anna comes from a traditional background where the culture of taboo and shame still surrounds families of children with special needs. Despite her multiple attempts to understand her surrounding and fight against it, Anna felt alone with her husband and children who were also having a difficult time with Vera's diagnosis. After joining the Parent-to-Parent support group, meeting special need moms like her, and listening to sessions on child rights and advocacy, Anna's change of spirit and attitude was apparent as happiness radiated from her eyes. She is now empowered and meets with individuals from her extended family, the same ones who were criticizing her daughter for her special needs, and explains to them all about Autism.





Watch Watch Anna's video testimony



As you've read in the ministry highlights above, it is during these difficult days in Lebanon that we are discovering the value of a ministry of presence – the value of eating together, sacrificing together, and shedding tears together.

Ecclesiastes 7:2-3 says, "It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart."

Lebanon is no doubt facing threats to its already fragile social peace, leaving local Christians without many choices. Either we submit to fear, or we must choose to "lift our eyes to the hills from where our help comes". Yet as the Body of Christ, it is specifically in these dire circumstances that we are called to walk by faith, pressing on toward the goal for which God has called us.

In the darkness, we are called to be the light, hand in hand.



Watch Light in the Tunnel video

"You are the *Liquid* of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

– Matthew 5:14-16 –



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- in alphabetical order -

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All photos were taken with informed consent. Some names were changed to protect individuals.





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MEBO is a registered 501c3 organization and a member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA).