

## **“Solidarity with Beirut”: 3,5 years of Mission of Domus Orientalis and Caritas of Łódź in Lebanon**

On the 4th of August, 2020, a tragic explosion hit the city of Beirut. Being there, we decided to organise an immediate help. We were directed to St. Michael's Church in the Port Area. There, we met f. Elia, who helped us to create a wonderful Team of high-spirited and strong-willed volunteers with a "mixed" (Lebanese-Syrian-Palestinian) team of workers. Just few days later we've started to work. People like Sumar or Chadi, whom we met that time, now are the pillars of our Team.



During those 3 years of our Mission, we helped to restore/supply **107 apartments** and **10 other places**, we provided support to **41 workplaces** (“Give a Job!” project), distributed and delivered **food packages, medicine, heaters, baby milk** etc. We also installed over 150 lamps with a solar panels to a needy families, provided support for a winter and helped to a **firemen families**.

We also created **Young Team Of Domus Orientalis (YBTE)** and launched a project called **“The First Step”**. With time YBTE grew and started to implement cultural and educational activities, in Mar Mkhayel Cultural Center and in Ain el Remmaneh area.



Total costs for all projects: **177 000 USD** and **19 000 EUR** (including administrative costs) with **additional 22 000 USD** (estimated value of baby milk donation) and **23 000 USD** (grant from Polish MFA for solar system for Mar Mkhayel Cultural Centre).

So far, we have been working in the **4 main fields**:

**1. Restoration of damaged apartments and other places / providing with furniture and other home appliances ("To help them shelter back"):**

**a) Port area, Mar Mkhayel and neighbourhood housing estates:** works were carried out in **86 (+5 recurring) apartments**: mainly replacement of glass, windows, doors, reconstruction of broken walls, provision with equipment and furniture, so people can return their homes.

**b) Ain el Remmeneh estate:** minor refurbishment works (mainly glass restoration, except one building where we installed lift) were carried out in **21 apartments**.

**c) 10 other places** (restorations/other support): sports club in Burj Hammoud, schools: in Clemenceau, in Ain el Remmaneh, in Nabaa, in Ashrafiyeh, works at the st. Michel's Church, solar panels and Book Corner for the Mar Mkhayel Cultural Center, support for "Beit Marina" in Ashout, Chiyah Park, and by dispensary in Asharifiyh.



**2. „Give a Job!” project ("To give them the tools to rebuild a decent life")**

Assistance in the reactivation / opening of **41 workplaces (+ 2 recurring)**, including the renovation works and the purchase of the necessary equipment.



### 3. **Emergency help** ("Because it's important to be with them")

#### 1st Phase – just after the blast:

- In collaboration with other NGO's: support for the **field kitchen** in distribution of min. 100 meals / **help to the 30 African migrant women** including payment for rent, purchase of vitamins, food and hygiene products, arrangement of medical visits / **purchase of medicines** for Syrian refugees, single mothers (baby formula, diapers), **medical and financial support** to the families of those who died in the port.
- Organising the **financial support for all 10 families of the firemen who died in the port**. Project was carried with Polish Firemen Brigade.



#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase – providing support according to the changing needs:

- We continued **distribution of food packages** (190 in both phases), **face masks** (1000), **cloths** (4 distributions through a social shop in Ain el Remmaneh), 100 electrical heaters.
- We continued **financial support** (in both phases we've helped 9 families, workers of St Michel's Church and to the "Little Sisters") and **medical** (6 medical treatments/surgeries, medical examination for one girl and we provided medicines for 2 other people).
- We continued **support for the firemen families**: additional financial support for Khaki, Hawa and Qartaba's families, psychological support to one person and help in opening of 2 shops to a Malachee family ("Give a Job!").
- **"Warmth for Beirut"** - support for 33 families (including living in the South of Lebanon) with diesel, gas, heaters, wood or generator subscription.
- **"Milk for Beirut"** - 3048 boxes of baby formula was distributed by us.
- **"Light for Beirut"** - installation of 166 lamps with a solar panel: 111 in Beirut area, 50 in the South (Homsiyeh and Kfour), 5 in Tripoli.



#### 4. „YBTE” („Cause Young people are the Hope!”)

YBTE (YoungBestTeamEver) was created to promote other aspects of our Mission, such as ecological projects, cultural and educational activities and inter-religious dialogue.

All started with a beach cleaning, but today YBTE is not only implementing projects created in Poland but also has it's own initiatives, which will be copied in the other areas, where Domus Orientalis is present.



#### Implementation of the projects created in Poland:

a) **"Wojtek Helps"** - a project created by our volunteer Magda, using the character of Wojtek the Bear to conduct artistic and educational workshops with a side aspect of supporting the projects in Syria and Lebanon.

Magda herself introduced the „Wojtek” in the Mar Mkhayel Cultural Center. After that YBTE conducted 5 subsequent series: in the same place (for girls from "Beit al Batat") in Chiyah Park and in the NDA school for children from "First Step".



b) **"Gardens of Lebanon"**

- **1st Edition:** "*Fiber, fabric, bond*" (2022): 14 Polish artists, inspired by M. Sontag, gave us 23 works, exhibited by us in Chiyah Park and CK Mar Mkhayel (together with the concert of young talents "Dare to Dream") . Then the works were shown in Poland and auctioned to continue the Project.

- **2nd Edition:** "*Water, Source, Life*" (2023): this time we hosted 33 works by 14 artists, mainly watercolorists, which we showed not only in the two above-mentioned places but also at the University of La Sagesse.

Additionally, **"Young Gardens of Lebanon"** was created - workshops for children from Poland and Lebanon. At Cultural Center Mar Mkhayel, we organized 5 series of classes, ending with an exhibition.



c) **"First Step"** - scholarship's adoption which was first introduced in Aleppo in 2019 (currently 320 children in the Project), and than in Beirut in the above-mentioned NDA school in Badaroo (69 children so far) and in Nabatiyeh (11 kids)

YBTE runs various workshops at the school, including two Easter's and Christma's workshops.



Projects initiated by YBTE:

a) **Green Projects:** we've started with a beach cleaning (8 times) and a street in Ain el Remmaneh. This is how the YBTE was formed.

Then our volunteer Dany started wooden works by making pots and souvenirs from the wood taken from broken windows and furniture, damaged during the blast.

Some of those works were auctioned or gifted but some were used during the workshops f.e. in Beit al Fatat. Other pots we used for planting at the Cultural Center in Mar Mkhayel



b) **The Book Corner:** an unique place created by YBTE in Mar Mkhayel Cultural Center. It is a corner where you can relax, work or read books.

However, what makes this place unique are our monthly meetings, during which we discuss books, invite speakers, or simply discuss selected topics.

We are considering creating a discussion club around this project, which in the future may start working on interreligious dialogue and other social problems.



c) **Other:**

- **Chiyah Park:** 2 times games and fun in Chiyeh Park combined with the distribution of 100 pencil cases for the poorest children and self defence training / support for the Women's Day (twice) and a children's keermese / workshops on the occasion of St. Barbara's Day
- **Mar Mkhayel Cultural Center:** Christmas and St. Barbara's Day workshops / „Elderly Week”
- **„Beit Al Fatat”:** 3 visits in Cherfe with a packages, gifts and kitchen supplies / 2 visits of the girls in St Michel's Cultural center
- **The Bumblebees/Fightlife Lebanon:** support in covering training's costs for 3 kids
- **Psychological support:** Hiba is working with 3 people, she also finished one therapy of other kid
- **Media:** Anthony and Chloe made amazing photo/video promo materials
- **Trainings:** Mona is providing YBTE with a teambuilding's workshops (3 sessions)



## Partners in Poland and funds

It wouldn't be possible to do such work without a great material support obtained from ordinary Polish donors and through our partners and friends from **Caritas of the Archdiocese of Łódź**, **Caritas Poznań** and **Pracownia Ikon Eleusa**.

It's also worth to mention the baby formula's donation from the Mead Johnson Nutrition Trading Poland Spółka z.o.o, grant from Polish Aid, support from the "Life Rosary" or "Orszak Trzech Króli" for the "Light for Beirut".



## Partners in Lebanon:

- All above activities were carried out under the umbrella of **St. Michael's Church in Mar Mkhayel**, with the support of **Redemptoris Mater Liban**
- We are constantly collaborating in cost's sharing with **the Sisters of St Augustine in Pennabili, Italy**, who organized a fundraiser to help the affected people
- Other partners in the past phases: **Shift, Arcensiel, WPF, FCD and TTF**.

## Further actions:

- Further restorations in destroyed areas aiming provision of furniture etc., development of a "Give a Job!" and the emergency support according to the changing needs.
- The operational centre would be St Michael's Aid and Cultural Center from where we are also going to take the steps to develop projects outside Beirut, like we did at the South of Lebanon by helping families affected by the war and critical economical situation.
- Development of the **YBTE's** projects and it's structure.
- Accompaniment to the families we've already helped by prayers, visits, additional support, including encouraging them to participate in our cultural events.

***We are ready for the Further Mission! Walk with us! SIŁA! (STRENGTH)!***



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