



**End Child Labour..... End Child Labour .....**

***In response to the Good Shepard Sisters International Trustees and Peace office, I participate in this campaign as a partner of the Good Shepard Sisters in Lebanon and a member of **ينابيع الامل** - Wells of Hope in the Middle East to fight for ending human trafficking.***

We often come across children working in different workplaces during daytime, when normally they should be at school, to receive education and have a healthy social life. These children are put in heavy labor, something that affects negatively their physical and mental development. In some societies, children are expected to play a considerate part in family work from an early age, and they are often being exploited both by their parents and their employers. Exploitative child labor is a tremendous issue affecting the Lebanese society nowadays, and to be able to fight it better, we have to look closely at its major causes.

My name is Nayiri ARSLANIAN , and I am a social worker. As a partner of the Good Shepherd Sisters and a member of **ينابيع الامل** (Wells of Hope), one of my most important tasks is to organize awareness sessions, along with a small team, in areas below the extreme poverty line, for women, teenagers and children about Human Trafficking and through that, child labour, which can be considered one of the worst forms of trafficking. Thus in areas like the Southern Suburb of Beirut, Palestinan camps Ouzai and Sabra camps, Nabaa, Sin el Fil and Bourj Hammoud, as well as the Bekaa governorate are in an extreme need of attention and social care. Both children and adults in need or at risk, need protection and social support.



Therefore, our job is to provide them as much as we can, with all kinds of social supports, among which, raising awareness about human trafficking and child labor.

In Lebanon, child labor happens due to a number of reasons, and lately, we are noticing that the number of children dropping out of school for work is increasing. One of the reasons for this is the current economic crisis as well as the political instability, as families do not have enough income, and with poverty and unemployment, children are put to work so they can have enough money to survive.



Another reason is the pandemic; as a result of the lockdown, the family adults are temporarily or permanently unemployed, and with the schools being closed, they send their children to work in their place.

Our continuous sessions have proven to us, that many households, where the mother is the primary provider, the children are encouraged to work in order to make a living. This situation results in more labor exploitation from the employers. During our meetings with parents, mostly the Syrian refugees, we tend to raise awareness by informing them about sexual harassments, physical and verbal abuse their children might encounter while working at an early age. Later on, these same parents come to tell us about their children's experiences at work. As a social worker, I am asked to guide them to deal with the difficult situations, and if necessary, to personally intervene in the name of Wells of Hope.



I am going to tell you the story of Mohammad, a 13-year-old boy, who left school to work at a supermarket, lifting and carrying heavy boxes for 14 hours a day. His weekly income was 50,000 LBP, which, according to his mother was a very fair compensation. But what she didn't know, was the conditions in which her son was working. After a one-on-one session with her, we have been well informed about her life story and the reasons behind the necessity of her son's work at such an early age. Our intervention was needed in this case, and as a result, Mohammad's

working hours were reduced. We also guided him into pursuing some kind of a profession, as well as literacy classes, knowing that it would be difficult for him to return to school.

While doing field work, I tend to inform the mothers about their children's rights at work, from long working hours to insecure working environments. We usually look into the situations case by case, so that if we could send some of them back to school, we do so, or else, we work on sending them to vocational technical schools and/or literacy classes, where they can receive the type of education that would prepare them to work in various jobs in the future.



Ahmad, a 16-year-old teenager, is the one who works to provide food and basic needs to his family. He is obliged to work for very long hours, so that his sisters could go to school. With our intervention, not only Ahmad's working conditions were improved, but also his sisters received awareness sessions, along with other young girls, on early marriage and its negative consequences, in order to prevent it as much as possible.

Poverty, lack of opportunities and awareness are leading many parents to the conclusion that in order to survive, their children must be sent to work instead of school, as they think that studying will not bring them a better future, as long as they do not have a good quality of life at the present.



Unfortunately, we are unable to prevent this problem at the moment, because we do not have alternatives. The only thing we can do is thriving to make these children's working conditions better, to raise awareness in order to prevent labor exploitation, guide them to find their passions, discover their talents, pursue vocational education and ameliorate their skills. If they are illiterate, we help them take literacy classes, and if they want and are able to return to school, we would do our best to help them do so.



*It is true, that we do not work directly to prevent child labour, but we are doing our best to raise awareness about this issue among the poorest societies and the refugees, because we believe that this is a very important social issue that must be tackled nowadays, especially with the technological and technical developments.*



**NAYIRI ARSLANIAN**

