



Addressing the Needs of the Assyrian Community in Lebanon



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The Institute for Development, Research, Advocacy and Applied Care, is a leading scientific institute dedicated to mental health in Lebanon and the Arab world. It is a non-governmental organization specialized in raising awareness, conducting research, training programs, community services and field interventions for the benefit of the public and for the promotion of human rights. It has been involved in many national and international studies, targeting different segments of the population and assessing different types of mental health conditions.

IDRAAC's objectives are to:

- Educate and increase public awareness on mental health
- Reach out to policy makers to address mental health on the national level
- Advocate for mental health as a basic human right and work on preserving the human rights of persons affected by mental health conditions
- Implement community intervention programs addressing various aspects of mental health
- Conduct and promote research in mental health on national, regional and international levels.
- Offer individuals and communities the means of identifying, dealing with and overcoming mental disorders
- Train students and professionals in the practice and research of mental health
- Develop and adapt suitable instruments for research in Lebanon and the Arab region

Project Activities

The project aimed at empowering the Assyrian Hosting and Refugee community in Lebanon, who are vulnerable populations and who experienced war and displacement.



The project provided mental health and psychosocial support to the entire Assyrian community through building the capacity of the Assyrian community workers and teachers, and through providing medical and mental health support to all age groups.

The activities of the project are:

- Learning how to identify mental health problems for all age groups.
- Providing medical & psychological screening for persons above 60 years old.
- Teaching mothers who have trouble caring for their children and helping them to raise their children.
- Teaching school children to cope better with the effects of war and displacement.
- Conducting a series of awareness lectures to the total Assyrian community.
- Organizing a Health Fair Day.

Learning to Identify Mental Health Problems

Community workers from the Assyrian Church were trained on mental health problems. The training involved the following modules:

- Communication skills.
- Adult and elderly mental health problems such as sleep problems, traumatic stress, loss and grief, anxiety and depression.
- Child mental health problems such as anxiety, mood disorder, behavioral disorder, ADHD, bedwetting, tics and Autism Spectrum Disorder.

The training enabled the Assyrian community workers to identify minor and moderate mental illness; such as anxiety, depression, stress disorders, and unexplained medical complaints.



In addition, an early career physician from within the Assyrian community was trained to provide mental health screening and services to the total Assyrian community.

The physician worked as a referral focal point for psychological problems in three schools and three community centers related to three churches. Patients with severe mental health problems were referred to IDRAAC for more specialized care.

Medical Screening for the Elderly

This program consisted of providing medical and mental health screening and treatment to the Assyrian elderly individuals.

Community workers from the Assyrian Church were trained to complete screening scales with the elderly to detect several mental disorders including memory disorders, depression and anxiety.



In addition, a Geriatric physician visited the Assyrian Church once per week to screen, examine and treat a number of elderly patients.

The analysis of the screening scales showed that around 60% of the elderly individuals have depression, 40% have anxiety and 49% have cognitive impairment.

The project built the capacity of 7 community workers from within the Assyrian community. These community workers will continue to provide mental health screening for the elderly individuals and will refer cases to specialized care when they identify them.

Positive Parenting Sessions

Community workers from the Assyrian Churches were trained to provide positive parenting sessions for mothers. This program consisted of educating mothers new strategies of positive parenting and how to reduce children's behavioral difficulties.



A total of 153 mothers from the refugees and the Lebanese hosting community of the different Assyrian Churches participated in these sessions.



The project built the capacity of 7 community workers from within the Assyrian community. These community workers will continue to provide the positive parenting sessions to the mothers after the end of the project.

Positive Parenting Sessions

At the end of the program, mothers gave their opinions regarding the program.



The mothers reported that the program improved their knowledge, skills, and relationships with their children. They learned how to interact with their children in a more responsive manner and they learned alternative ways to discipline them.

Testimonial of a mother

"I have a daughter who is 6 years old and who has a lot of trauma, anxiety and fears. I have a lot of difficulties with her. This program helped me a lot."



Resilience School Program



Teachers of three schools affiliated with Assyrian Churches were trained to provide resilience building sessions to the students.

Each session included a combination of carefully selected emotional and cognitive-behavioral intervention techniques aiming at controlling and balancing body and mind.

Pre and post questionnaires were administered to students, teachers, and parents on various aspects including personal competence, coping skills, anxiety, depressive symptoms, behavioral problems, aggression as well as exposure to stressful events.

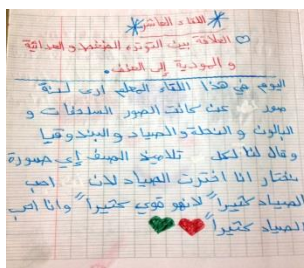


Results of the intervention showed the following:

- According to the teachers' reports, the project showed an improvement in the aggression, hyperactivity, attitudes, behaviors and impulsivity of the students.
- According to the children's own reports on the various measures, the project showed an improvement in anxiety, coping, resilience (problem solving capacities, social skills, optimism and hopefulness) and concentration

Resilience School Program

At the end of the program, testimonials were given by the school teachers who implemented the program. These testimonials showed how the teachers developed their skills in communication including how to give and ask for support and to learn active empathic listening. These testimonials also showed the challenges faced by the teachers in implementing the resilience school intervention.



In addition, students also expressed their opinions towards the program, through letters and drawings, showing the extent to which they have enjoyed and benefited from the intervention.



Public Awareness Lectures

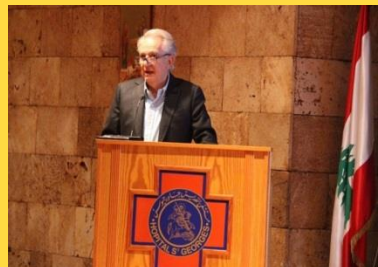
A series of awareness lectures were provided to the various Assyrian communities. These lectures targeted different mental health problems in all age groups (the elderly, adults, adolescents and children).

In addition, a lecture was given to the Assyrian and Lebanese community on the history of the Assyrians across time.



The topics of the lectures were the following:

- Mental health problems in the elderly population: geriatric depression, anxiety and dementia.
- Sleeping problems in adults.
- Communication skills & traumatic stress in adults.
- Child & adolescents mental health and behavioral problems
- Anxiety in children and behavioral disorders in children.
- ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) & autism in children.
- Assyrians: Cradle of civilization between present injustices and future challenges.



Health Fair Day

A Health Fair Day was organized in November 2016 by Saint Georges Hospital University Medical Center (SGHUMC) and IDRAAC in collaboration with the Assyrian Church of the East where several medical departments from SGHUMC were present at the same time offering full medical screening to anyone requesting it.



During the Health Fair Day, individuals were provided consultations in the following specialties: Pediatrics, Pulmonary Medicine, Urology, Family Medicine, Psychiatry and Clinical Psychology, Ophthalmology, Dermatology, Gastroenterology and Nephrology. Screening was conducted for: Osteoporosis, Head, Neck & Spine, Blood Glucose, Blood Pressure, Breast Cancer, Cardiac Status, Cervical Spine, Diabetes, Diet, Hearing, Testing for HBA1C and Pap smear.

328 persons attended the Health Fair Day and around 1,248 free consultations were provided.



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