

The Letter

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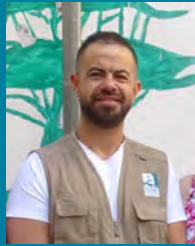


**HELPING CHILDREN
DISPLACED BY CONFLICT**

**DISABILITY CAN'T STOP
YOUNG PEOPLE FROM
TRANSFORMING THEIR FUTURE**



EDITORIAL



IN LEBANON: INACTION IS A CRIME

Beirut, 4th December,

Every day, as National Director for Lebanon, I witness the daily toll taken by the war that began on our southern borders, and its devastating impact on civilians. Violence is spiralling out of control, and the effect of diplomacy is decreasing. Air strikes are no longer limited to the southern border: bombs are now landing inside Lebanon. Near our homes in Beirut, we hear the roar of explosions. The recent use of targeted strikes has injured and killed hundreds of civilians, making it clear to each of us that we too could become “collateral damage”.

Panic and chaos are everywhere. Lebanon is experiencing the largest and fastest population displacement in its history. As of October 2024, around 20% of Lebanon’s population (over 1.2 million people) had fled their homes, in many cases for the third or fourth time. The number of people in need of assistance – for example, requiring shelter – has swamped the capacity of government services and humanitarian aid. Many have spent between 12 and 15 gruelling hours attempting to reach Beirut, only to be prevented by the bombings and forced to seek refuge elsewhere. The Mount Lebanon region has provided a natural place of refuge – but for how much longer? In Beirut, around Asmae’s headquarters, refugees now fill the streets. Schools have opened their doors, providing shelter, toilets and a safe space for the hundreds gathering there.

At Asmae, we have chosen to stay and take action. Our mission compels us to confront this urgent crisis.

Our teams are fully engaged, and are delivering essential supplies (ready-to-eat food kits, hygiene kits, blankets, pillows, quilts and other essentials) to children and families in need. We remain steadfast in our commitment to early childhood education, providing families with educational kits (colouring books, notebooks, pencils, crayons and other supplies) that testify to the fact that a future is possible, and that young people have a role to play in shaping it. Activities such as reading, writing and drawing help to keep children connected, positive and occupied.

Some may view our efforts as a drop in the ocean amidst such turmoil. But we know they amount to far more than that. They are in fact a lifeline for the future of Lebanon’s young people. We owe it to them to stay, and to keep them alive, resilient and full of hope. Forward, always!

Nadeem Khaddaj,
Country Representative, Lebanon



For 44 years now, Asmae has been continuing the work of its founder, always staying true to her principles

OUR VISION

“A fair world where children are guaranteed the opportunity to live and grow up in dignity within their families and their environments to become free men and women who can contribute to society”.

OUR MISSIONS

- **To promote child development** through a global approach. To achieve this, Asmae also works to support families with their environments firmly in mind.
- **To strengthen the capacity of local stakeholders** working in the field of child development, improving synergies between them and maximising their social impact.
- **To champion children’s causes** by raising awareness and speaking out.
- **To experiment, expand and share information.**

ASMAE IN FIGURES

- **75,800 beneficiaries**
- **8 countries** of intervention
- **45 partner** associations
- **148 professionals** worldwide
- **39 volunteers**
- **21 100 donors**

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AT THE HEART OF THE ACTION

LEBANON EMERGENCY: LISTENING AND RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN IN TIMES OF WAR

The war in Lebanon is causing forced displacement, plunging more than a million people – including 350,000 children – into a situation of vulnerability. These children are exposed to physical and psychological risks. Having polled the needs expressed by affected communities, Asmae – through its Lebanese teams and local partners – is setting up an emergency response to support them.

Testimonies from Lebanese children highlight critical needs

In this war-torn situation, our Lebanese teams are fully committed to standing alongside victims to address their urgent needs. Working closely with local associations, we listen to the concerns of children and their families.

The needs currently being expressed underscore the urgency of ensuring access to shelter, food and psychosocial support to help them navigate this crisis. Children in particular are enduring profound trauma through their exposure to physical and psychological risks. Our teams are reporting sleep disturbances, anxiety and depressive symptoms, highlighting the importance of offering them protection and support.

We are acting in response to the crisis and calling for humanitarian law to be upheld

Amid this humanitarian crisis, we are reiterating our call for adherence to international humanitarian law and support efforts for an immediate ceasefire. It is vitally important to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure.



Distribution of emergency kits

Thanks to the unwavering commitment of our Lebanese colleagues, we continue to tailor our efforts in response to the expressed needs. To provide basic necessities, we have already organised distributions of emergency, hygiene and educational kits. Our priority remains clear: meeting the essential needs of children and families, whether they be protection, access to education or psychosocial support.

True to Asmae’s commitment in Lebanon, initiated 37 years ago by Sister Emmanuelle, we will continue to stand alongside groups in vulnerable situations as they face present and future challenges.

Our thanks to Stop Hunger for funding these distributions.



A child receiving support from an Asmae member during a distribution



SPECIAL REPORT PEACE

GROWING UP AMID CRISIS: CHILDREN FACING CHALLENGES IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE AND BURKINA FASO WITH THE PEACE PROGRAMME.

In a world in which armed conflicts continue to undermine the fundamental rights of children, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso find themselves at a critical juncture. The worsening situation in the Sahel is forcing millions of people to flee their homes. In Côte d'Ivoire, 59,545 asylum seekers have been registered, while in Burkina Faso, 2 million people have been internally displaced. In response to this crisis, children in vulnerable situations are participating in the PEACE (Protecting Children Affected by Conflict or Exclusion) programme, designed to address their specific needs.*

Children at risk: conflicts in Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire are threatening their protection and access to education

Displacements have impacted actions supporting children's rights to protection and education. Thousands of displaced families are living in critical conditions without access to clean water or sanitation facilities. Displaced children may be cut off from their communities and interactions with other children, while educational facilities – which typically play a key role in managing trauma and supporting children's health – are not always accessible to them. These children are exposed to environments of exacerbated physical and sexual violence. Disruptions to their education further threaten their future.

Building the future: children and their families raising awareness to create protective environments

The PEACE programme educates parents and children on vital issues such as parent-child communication, violence against children, female genital mutilation and early marriage. Nearly 8,000 children and 4,000 parents now have a better understanding of these crucial issues, enabling them to protect themselves and others from the resulting dangers.

The activities carried out by Asmae's partner organisations have been co-constructed to prioritise children's needs. Teams can swiftly identify high-risk situations and children requiring psychosocial, medical or nutritional support. In northern Burkina Faso, some 6,500 children are participating in education and social activities such as reading workshops facilitated by "bibliomotos" – tricycles transformed into mobile libraries. They also engage in singing, dancing and awareness sessions on children's rights, health and hygiene. In Korhogo, Côte d'Ivoire, Asmae carried out nearly 300 home visits to better understand children's living conditions and identify their specific needs and those of their families. These visits are also a way of raising awareness in families and providing them with psychosocial support.

Committed actors for enhanced child protection

To provide an appropriate response to the needs expressed by children and their families, Asmae places particular emphasis on supporting professionals working closely with vulnerable groups.

By offering training sessions and promoting networking among these professionals, Asmae ensures that each partner has the

necessary tools to provide support tailored to the needs of the children and their families. In Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, staff members have also received training on child participation, giving children a central role in their own development and enabling them to express themselves and actively participate in their own journeys.

In Burkina Faso, nearly 7,500 educational structures have been trained and equipped with the "Yam Wekre" picture book, a tool developed by Asmae to improve children's reading and language skills. In Côte d'Ivoire, child protection training has been created to help professionals recognise signs of violence in children. Participants have spoken clearly of the benefits of these sessions, reporting significant improvements in their abilities to safeguard children and foster safe learning environments.

* United Nations Refugee Agency, June 2024

TESTIMONIES from our programme beneficiaries

Read a few inspiring success stories that show the impact of our PEACE programme across Egypt, the Philippines, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso, and the hope that our actions are generating on the ground.

"It's the first time I've heard the words "children's rights", and children have the right not to be beaten."

Maher,
15-year-old student in Egypt

"As a Sama Bajau student, I want to learn more about how other tribes show pride in their language and culture."

Dia,
Project beneficiary in the Philippines

"The training helped me not only from a professional point of view, but also in raising my children. After the training, I realised that hitting them doesn't solve bad behaviour. Now, I listen to my children more, and I've also stopped hitting them."

Ali,
Former preparatory school teacher in the Manshiyat Nasser region

"One day, the neighbourhood facilitator came to see me at the hospital. He talked to my parents and left. One week later, Asmae Burkina gave me money to help me get treatment. It was 200,000 CFA francs, which is €304. This help was very important to me, because it meant my parents could pay for my care. My illness almost cost me my life. Now, I'm doing much better, and I'm very happy. I hope the activities to help children continue!"

Moussa,
Child beneficiary of the PEACE programme

Financial partner: the French Development Agency

FOCUS ON

EGYPT: YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ARE TRANSFORMING THEIR OWN FUTURES AND BREAKING BARRIERS.

In Egypt as elsewhere, young people with disabilities face significant discrimination in the job market. The YIEP project run by Asmae is helping 300 young people living with disability or in vulnerable situations to find the tools to access the job market on their own.

They're finally opening the doors to the job market!

Access to vocational training for young people who are vulnerable or living with disability is complex. Their disabilities restrict the range of tasks they can perform, and sometimes also reduce the size of the social network they can draw upon. Because access to education is more difficult for people with disabilities, they often have below-average qualifications.

The drive to succeed

Wanting to remove the obstacles to their professional integration, 300 young Egyptians aged between 15 and 24, including 100 with disabilities, chose to join the YIEP programme launched by Asmae and its local partners.

They all come with their own hopes and dreams. Although they are all looking to the future, not all of them are clear on what they want to do. Some may dream of opening a store, but wonder what types of product to sell. Others may want to work in a corporate administrative department, but should it be accounting or HR? For this reason, they participate in individual sessions to clarify their professional objectives and aspirations.

Next, a wide range of training courses tailored to each person's abilities and preferences is made available (IT, mechanics, cooking and even sewing). Local teams also ensure that young women can access any career they wish to pursue. Gender equality is an additional challenge they must face.

Increasing their chances of success in the job market

Once trained, it's time for everyone to formulate job search strategies. How do I get in touch with companies? How can I show myself in my best light? Writing a CV is much more than just a detail: it's now an essential skill at this stage of the process of integrating into the world of work. Lastly, they need to prepare for interviews.

And what about starting your own business?

To promote self-reliance, 180 young people from this programme, including 30 with disabilities, are planning to start their own business. What a challenge! In their case, the "Start Your Business" programme gives them the essential tools they need to become entrepreneurs. The most promising projects are promoted by Asmae, and receive financial or in-kind support to make them a reality.

Financial partners for the programme: European Union



MADAGASCAR: REBECCA: HUMAN POTENTIAL REVEALED. YOUNG MALAGASY PEOPLE FIND THE J2A PROJECT TO BE A PLACE WHERE THEY CAN RELEASE ENERGY.

In Madagascar, the "Jeunesse Actrice de leur Avenir" (J2A) programme provides integration opportunities for young people in vulnerable situations, with a focus on youth participation; young people are both beneficiaries and active participants. We spoke with Rebecca, a young peer educator in the programme. She supports other young people from her community and passes on her knowledge to them.



What challenges have you faced as a young peer educator, and how have you overcome them?

There have been plenty, but the biggest one was wondering if I could actually train other young people: some were the same age as me, or even older. There was one young parent who looked at me, and I could guess what he might be thinking: "Oh, so she thinks she's got something to teach me?" » Looking into his eyes, I was afraid I wouldn't succeed. But then I spoke to Jorida, the Asmae project manager, who explained to us how to overcome certain obstacles. And I thought: "Just go for it!" My self-confidence has grown since I became a young peer educator.

Can you tell us about your personal and professional background before you joined the J2A programme?

I was previously a student at the Vakinankaratra Institute of Higher Education, studying architecture and landscaping. After completing my second year, I started to have doubts and ask myself if I really wanted to become an engineer. And I thought: "No, that's not what I want!" After that, I took a bit of a break and did nothing. Then the J2A project came along.

How did you hear about the J2A programme, and what made you want to get involved?

I saw a recruitment ad for volunteer "young peer educators" on social media. I applied... and I was accepted! After that, they explained the project and its goals to me, and I was immediately interested!

What skills did you acquire through the peer educator training, and how has it affected your daily life?

The essential life skills have helped me a lot to open up to other young people. Now, when I speak and share my ideas, they come out clearer. I express myself better! With appropriate vocabulary. I don't talk like a child any more. Giving to beneficiaries has made me more mature and professional. It has enabled me to see things in a more positive light. I've also developed my foreign language skills. Speaking in French with Claire, the Projects and Partnerships Manager at Asmae, has helped me improve. It's really motivated me! I like coming to Asmae's office; it's good to see them. Before the training, I was something of a shy girl who was always afraid to express her opinion, but now I talk constantly!

What do you like best about your role as a peer educator, and why?

What I like most is providing training to young people who come from challenging social backgrounds. For example, from the "CARITAS" and "Aide aux Filles et Femmes en détresse" organisations. When I deliver training, the participants are always motivated so I'm always eager to do it. I really enjoy sharing and giving these training sessions!

How do you see your future after participating in the J2A programme?

After J2A, I imagine myself as someone who supports young people – a trainer who gives them time, daily support and advice. Before the project, I had always dreamed of creating an association that would help vulnerable young people and children.

Financial partner for the programme: the French Development Agency

ZOOM SUR ANKIZY

Sustainable access to education for children in Madagascar.

In Madagascar, 1.5 million school-age children are not enrolled in a school. Asmae is running the "Ankizy" project in Antananarivo to provide sustainable access to education for children living on the streets and those facing serious learning difficulties, or who have dropped out of school.

Through this project, 1,164 children have been enrolled in pre-school or literacy classes. In addition to classes, they take part in summer camps, school trips and craft workshops. An educational tool, the "Sary Festy" picture book, distributed in schools, also supports the cognitive and psychosocial development of children.

Through its tailored response to the needs of these vulnerable children, the Ankizy project is helping to fight educational and social exclusion, offering them the chance of a brighter future.

Financial partners: AFD and IDEA Topaze.



INTERVIEW WITH JÉRÔME FOUGERAS LAVERGNOLLE PRESIDENT OF THE SANCTA DEVOTA FOUNDATION

You're supporting the Cap Jeunesse programme in Madagascar. Can you tell us about your experience with this first phase?

The Cap Jeunesse programme, launched in 2021 in Madagascar by Asmae, has achieved its objectives by supporting vulnerable young people aged 14 to 22. Its safe, stimulating environment and holistic approach has enabled them to acquire essential personal and professional skills that promote their social and professional integration. We have been particularly impressed by the expertise and commitment of Asmae's teams, who have effectively addressed local challenges during this first phase. Results have been both concrete and measurable, and have been regularly shared with the Foundation, making this collaboration all the more rewarding and constructive.

You have renewed your commitment. How does this partnership align with the Foundation's guidelines?

The partnership is fully aligned with the priorities of the Sancta Devota Foundation, especially in its support for individuals in precarious situations through education, with a focus on empowerment. The Cap Jeunesse programme in Madagascar embodies these values by offering vulnerable young people in this country tangible opportunities to develop their potential within their communities. It reflects our vision of sustainable and transformative impact for young people. We look forward to the next steps of this programme.

OUR ASSOCIATION'S "GRAND EVENING OF GENEROSITY"

Asmae takes action to protect children in response to humanitarian crises

Amid a global upsurge in humanitarian crises, children and their families are directly affected. They are the primary victims of these highly unstable situations. The purpose of this "evening of generosity" was to raise awareness and engage participants practically in the work undertaken by Asmae in various countries. Through projects run in Lebanon, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, the Philippines and also in France, Asmae works to secure a better future for children impacted by crises.

On the agenda: fundraising for children at risk

This charity event provided guests with a more in-depth look at the initiatives supported by the association and a way of actively contributing to them. Thanks to the generosity of the participants and partners, we were able to raise the sum of €90,000.

These funds will be used to finance education, health, protection and psychosocial support programmes for children.

Our thanks to you all: this initiative has secured the future of thousands of children.



Asmae Association
Sœur Emmanuelle

Asmae is an association formed under the French law of 1901. Recognised to be of public interest and authorised to receive bequests, donations and gifts.



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