Pink October is breast cancer awareness month, in which the world is covered in pink, where we find many people wearing this color throughout the month, in support of breast cancer patients, or to show their courage in fighting or recovering from this disease, but in any case all women, healthy or sick, join hands this month and dress in pink, to raise breast cancer awareness.

This month can be a reason to highlight the role of women in humanitarian work in general, and their efforts in URDA in particular. Women in URDA accompanied relief teams and staff in offices and in the field. They also harnessed their efforts to support other women who are most vulnerable in their society. URDA considers women whether among its staff, volunteers, or even beneficiaries to be essential partners in the implementation of its humanitarian projects.

URDA had dedicated several projects to women in various Lebanese regions which varied from economic empowerment to awareness-raising courses and support for widows and orphans. During Pink October, the healthcare sector offered a free mammograms for URDA employees and their families at URDA’s Al Wafaa Medical Center in Aramoun.

All of this places URDA among those who believe in women's ability to make a difference in society and transform it into a pink society fit for such women throughout the year. Women are not victims, in fact, they can lead a better society that is safe and peaceful in order to preserve their dignity and human rights.
URDA Provides Free Mammograms for its Employees

In October, which marks the breast cancer awareness month, URDA's health care sector provided free mammograms to URDA staff and their families. The service targeted women over 40 years of age at Al Wafaa medical center in Aramoun, Mount Lebanon where it offered them free of charge mammograms, which detects tumors in their early stages before symptoms arise.

The aim of this service is to raise awareness on the importance of early detection for women even if there are no symptoms of the disease to avoid detection at late stages, which puts women's lives at risk, as opposed to being diagnosed at early stages because the diagnosis contributes to a higher recovery rate of more than %95.

URDA Provides Electrical Appliances to 22 Families Supported by GlobalGiving

As part of the Emergency Relief Response Program for Camp 004 in Qub Elias, Bekaa on the 4th of August, URDA's relief teams continue the distribution of basic supplies to provide better livelihoods for those affected where around 22 families received refrigerators and washing machines with the support of generous donors on GlobalGiving.

For his part, one field volunteer explained that URDA made sure that these devices were distributed to beneficiaries according to the specific needs of each family, stressing that field teams will continue to support those affected at various levels.

It is reported that the URDA emergency relief teams came to the aid of those affected by the fire disaster by distributing relief items including bread bundles, water packs and hot meals, as well as working on an integrated damage assessment field survey.

URDA's Relief Sector Provides More than 10,000 Meat Portions Amid Severe Economic Crisis

The food crisis in Lebanon is not recent. The World Food Programme estimated that food prices increased by %628 in just two years, accelerating the collapse of the Lebanese economy, leaving three quarters of its population poor, and decreasing the Lebanese pound's value by %69. However, the food crisis has worsened dramatically in recent months amid fuel shortages and rising prices.

In this context, URDA's Relief Sector is implementing a meat distribution project this November for the most vulnerable families in Aarsal, Bekaa and Mount Lebanon, where the meat of 80 cows will be distributed to 10,640 families, each receiving 1.5 Kg of meat.

According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), %67 of Syrian refugees in Lebanon skip meals. One of our project's beneficiaries commented: “My family and I haven’t eaten meat in over a year, but fortunately, we can survive on one or two meals a day.” He thanked all those who had contributed to the distribution of meat portions in the hope that these humanitarian projects would continue to keep his family alive during these difficult times.

The United Nations estimates that more than 1 million Lebanese need relief assistance to meet their basic needs. These needs, whose prices have become outrageously high and difficult to access, such as bread, rice, sugar and legumes, are causing consumers to limit or even stop purchasing them, which threatens food security and creates a psychological and social crisis for citizens.
PSEA & Child Safeguarding Policy in URDA

Did you know that the Union of Relief and Development Associations has become an organization with a policy that is concerned with the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and Child Safeguarding? Therefore, the Union of Relief and Development Associations in Lebanon appointed a person responsible for receiving complaints of sexual exploitation and abuse or child safeguarding, after which it would investigate the complaint in full confidentiality in order to preserve the integrity of all persons involved in the investigation (complainant, accused, persons conducting the investigation, etc.)

Within the same framework, all URDA staff received training on how to deal with such issues within the organization, and at the end of the training, employees signed a document containing their commitment to abide by the policies.

The Sponsorship Sector Continues its Humanitarian Mission and Sponsors 1,207 Orphans and 281 Families

There is nothing as truthful as the hopes and dreams of orphans that are utterly spontaneous and innocent. Their dreams may be simple, but for them they mean a lot!

Some need a school bag for success, some are desperate for a warm jacket during the cold winter nights, while others dream of a cure for their diseases!

As such, the sponsorship sector in URDA is working to ensure that orphans are cared for within their own families, in order to ensure their urgent needs and provide them with decent living conditions, in the light of the current situation in the country and the reality in which they live. This requires the financial and moral support of sponsors and donors, as part of the mechanism of the sponsorship sector, which aims at helping them achieve the orphans’ aspirations, through the implementation of advanced welfare projects for the social, educational and living security of the orphans through an ongoing follow-up.

Pursuant to its humanitarian mission, during the month of October 2021, the sponsorship sector in URDA provided financial sponsorships to 1,207 orphans and 281 families.

Last year, the Sponsorship sector drew smiles on 1,174 orphans and achieved the dreams of 174 families in various Lebanese regions.
With the support of Africa Muslims Agency, URDA Opens "Aman" School in Bekaa to Provide Education to 650 Students

The Union of Relief and Development Association has opened "Aman" School in Bekaa with the funding of Africa Muslims Agency (AMA) and the sponsoring of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Lebanon. The opening was held, on 2021/10/27 to ensure 650 students of proper and safe education. Most of these students were deprived of their education due to their families’ low income and the constant increase in education costs due to the deterioration of the Lebanese economic situation.

The ceremony was attended by the Mayor of Bar Elias Municipality, Mr. Mawas Araji, a delegation of AMA with its CEO Imran Choonara, as well as some of the town’s chiefs, and representatives of the local and foreign associations.

At the beginning of the event, Mr. Imraan Choonara started with a speech praising the efforts done to ensure this humanitarian project’s success, "Aman School will provide official elementary education to 650 Syrian and Lebanese impoverished children equally, which will leave a positive impact on 650 families," he said. In his speech, he also highlighted the importance of educational projects and the establishment of schools in marginal countries.

Mr. Ashraf Ghanghrakar, the Education Officer for the AMA, told the attendees about his career and experiences in the educational field, which is found to be a tool to alter the lives of children and their families and make their dreams come true.

The event reflected the spirit of joy that embraced the students at an entertainment festival, which included inflatable games, and children’s songs, after teachers organized educational and recreational activities in classes.

Tasnim: A Student, a Sister and a Mother

It all started when I noticed my 11-year-old student, Tasnim, is not eating any of the items included in the Snack Bag we distribute to children in the Bus on the pretext of sharing the bags’ content with her brother at home, which urged me to pay her caregiver a visit to inquire about this matter to make sure she is okay.

Tasnim is a very hardworking girl who is always looking for the best. She loves going to school and gaining knowledge and displays a quite joyful spirit. After the death of her parents, Tasnim and her little brother find refuge at their grandmother’s home which lacks basic living standards.

While chatting with her grandmother, I found out that Tasnim has been saving her snack bags to sell them after school so she can earn enough money to buy her little brother a new pair of shoes since she considers herself responsible for him, mainly after the death of her parents.

Despite being deeply touched by Tasnim’s gesture, I had a little talk with her to make her understand that denying herself those snack bags will not bring her or her family joy. I then offered my help to buy her little brother shoes after making her promise me to share her future thoughts, concerns and questions with me so we can reach a better solution together. During my everyday ride in the bus, I get to know my students even more; I get to see who they are, what they want and what they can be. I find my daily motivation to become a better teacher in those little souls who have so much potential, affection and determination that can inspire whoever gets to know them.”

Sarah Alaa Eddine
Samar Makes Chocolate with the Support of the WEE.CAN Project

"Chocolate has always been and still is what makes me happy, so eating it increases my heart rate!" That's how the 55-year-old Samar describes her love of chocolate. She adds, "I never had a chance to learn how to make chocolate at home until I took part in a training session on homemade chocolate here in Tripoli, Abu Samra area. I loved the idea and I started working on making delicious and very nutritious chocolate for my family, using basic kitchen tools.

After that, I applied for the WEE.CAN grant through URDA to develop my own small business and manage to purchase all the materials and equipment necessary to develop my work.

I thank AICS, COSPE OXFAM and URDA from the bottom of my heart because without their support, the idea of developing this “Happiness Chocolate” project would have been impossible!

A Delegation from URDA Visits the Ambassador of Turkey to Lebanon

A delegation from the Union of Relief and Development Associations in Lebanon, headed by General Manager Mr. Houssam El Ghali, and his deputy, Mr. Haitham Mahmoud, visited his excellency ambassador Ali Baris Ulusoy, at the Turkish Embassy headquarters in Beirut, and congratulated him for taking up his new duties.

The visit was an account of the humanitarian work of URDA in various sectors and areas covered during the current economic conditions in Lebanon. The delegation thanked the efforts of the Turkish Government and the Turkish public for their contributions and efforts to provide relief and support to the Lebanese people during these difficult circumstances.

In turn, His Excellency the Ambassador stressed the need for continued support and the opening of new avenues for assistance with all Lebanese friends in all regions.

At the conclusion of the visit, the Director-General of His Excellency Mr. Al-Sverdshagen visited the URDA offices for close information on their work.