URDA Spread a Message of Hope This Winter

The cold season is almost around the corner, bringing back the same annual fear and concerns for the most vulnerable families who live in dire conditions in homes that lack the basic requirements for adequate housing and in remote areas, waiting to be swept up by heavy snow or floods. Under the title "Drops of Hope," URDA is launching its annual winter campaign for this season, with a spirit of hope and positivity at a time when the country is experiencing the hardest and worst economic crisis in its modern history.

It is expected that the campaign will benefit the most vulnerable groups in Lebanon, offering food, shelter, heating and other relief services that will bring hope to the beneficiaries and sustain their lives despite the difficult challenges that face them. The campaign will be offering food parcels, winter clothing, blankets and other sleep necessities, as well as heaters, heating fuel, tents, caravans, tent maintenance, home repairs, accommodation as well as hygiene and sterilization supplies to reduce the spread of coronavirus.

In this context, with the support of generous people as in every year, URDA is keen to carry out such a campaign at the beginning of every winter to alleviate the suffering of needy Lebanese, Syrians and Palestinians and to contribute to saving the lives of thousands of children, women and the elderly in the most affected areas.

This reality poses a major challenge to all institutions working in the humanitarian field and requires them to mobilize more resources and mobilize a great deal of energy in order to help preserve the dignity of these groups and reduce the risks.

Given the difficult situation of Lebanese and refugees in Lebanon, which is experiencing its worst economic crisis, URDA appeals to donors around the world to support the “Drops of Hope” campaign so that it can reach families in need and provide them with hope, dignity, safety and reassurance.
The gender-based violence program in URDA's protection sector launched the activities of the 16 days of activism campaign to fight against violence against women. The activities focus on the challenges faced by women and the importance of raising legal awareness, empowering women and encouraging them to bring about positive change in favor of their issues, as well as raising their voices on issues of gender-based violence through a range of legal and awareness-raising workshops, in addition to artistic, recreational and professional activities.

During the 16 days, the gender-based violence program in the protection sector seeks to intensify the campaign by setting up various events in several Lebanese regions, specifically in Arasal and Beirut, along with Akkar, Beqaa and Saida.

Activities that will be organized by the Protection team include microgardening, self-defense training sessions, as well as yoga, glass painting, and the use of recycled materials for handicrafts, which will conclude with the distribution of dignity kits to participating women.

It is worth mentioning that the campaign “16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence” is an annual event that begins on November 25, which marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and ends on December 10 which marks Human Rights Day and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The current public campaign is being launched at a time when United Nations figures indicate that one in three women have experienced physical or sexual violence during their lives, and calls to helplines during the COVID-19 pandemic have increased with regard to domestic violence.

As part of its efforts that fall within its 16 days of activism campaign against gender-based violence, the protection sector in URDA is carrying out a number of distinct activities and events that enhance the skills of survivors of gender-based violence in various Lebanese regions.

The first activity was launched on Thursday, 26 November 2021, in Aarsal, where 15 Syrian and Lebanese women and adolescent girls participated in a training course on micro-gardening, aimed at supporting the gardening skills and food security of female participants, transforming them from consumers to producers and empowering them to develop economic independence within their communities.

URDA's Livelihood Project Coordinator, Agricultural Engineer Ranya Bou Rjaili, took over the training task, stressing that micro-gardening projects help female participants to gain full knowledge about crop production by growing seeds without fertilizers, pesticides, as well as harvesting, and cooking healthy meals, thereby ensuring production, food security and sustainability.

The course concluded with an awareness session on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, the aim of which is to reduce sexual exploitation and abuse to which the beneficiary may be exposed by the service provider. The session included several topics, most notably understanding gender power dynamics and their relationship to sexual exploitation and abuse, the risks of sexual exploitation and abuse, gender-based violence and gender-based sexual violence, the principles of protection, and dealing with the disclosure and reporting of sexual exploitation and abuse.

It is worth noting that activities for this campaign will continue until the 10th of December, and will be reaching beneficiaries in Bekaa, Akkar, Saida and Beirut.
The Relief Sector Supports 400 Families in Saida Through its “Solar Power” Project

In response to the challenges of power outages across Lebanon, URDA’s relief sector implemented a project to provide solar-powered chargeable lamps. More than 496 families have benefited from this project in the poorest areas of the southern Lebanese city of Saida, at a time when various Lebanese regions are suffering from total blackout of 23 hours a day.

“These lamps allowed us to study at home. since candlelight is not practical and dangerous at the same time.” said our 13 year-old beneficiary, Enass, who expressed her joy to receive this service, which brought light to her daily and school life.

The relief sector is striving to complete this and other humanitarian projects that provide support to the most vulnerable groups of different nationalities across Lebanon.

Aya” Draws Smiles with Threads of Hope”

It is not just a small sewing project, it is a project that aims at drawing smiles and providing capacity-building for hundreds of children.

Aya, the 24-year-old talented young woman, discovered her talent in acting. She told our livelihood coordinator with a wide smile: “God has granted me the ability to make people laugh, especially during the current difficult situations where people’s faces have long been missing their usual smiles. Hence I established the “Educharacter” project which aimed to perform awareness plays for children as well as carry out entertainment activities that draw smiles on children’s faces.

After a while of dealing with the kids and performing plays, the idea of sewing dolls occurred to Aya’s mind! However, economic and financial conditions prevented any possibility of purchasing a sewing machine until the opportunity came to receive a grant from the “Women Empowerment” project in collaboration with URDA, which allowed this young woman to buy the machine and work on her first puppet to be used in future plays.
URDA Celebrates Lebanon’s 78 Independence Anniversary and Opens the “Independence Park” Unveiling the Cedar Monument Statue

Under the patronage of His Excellency Prince Talal Arslan, represented by Mr. Rashad Abu Faraj, Head of the Choueifat Department of the Lebanese Democratic Party, and the presence of the representative of His Excellency Mr. Ziad Haidar, Professor Hassan Abu Faraj, and representatives and masters of Arab clans, the Union of Relief and Development Associations held a ceremony to commemorate the 78th Lebanese Independence Day, near its main offices in Khalda. The ceremony concluded with the unveiling of the Cedar monument statue.

The celebration started with the Lebanese national anthem, followed by a speech by URDA’s General Manager Mr. Houssam Al Ghali, in which he stressed that URDA is distinctively celebrating independence today by planting trees and by continuously participating in preserving Lebanon’s independence through its humanitarian work in support of food and social security and the contribution of its specialized sectors to the well-being of society and alleviating the suffering of people. He thanked the men of independence and especially the hero Majid Arslan and paid tribute to the role of the municipality of Choueifat, which has been Beirut’s gate and keeper and stressed the need for regular cooperation in support of the Lebanese society in general and the area of Choueifat in particular.

In turn, the representative of the Mayor of Choueifat, Mr. Hassan Abu Faraj, delivered a speech during the celebration and addressed the historic day of independence when the sun of freedom shone and the occupier was expelled, paying tribute to the independence hero, Prince Majid Arslan. Abu Faraj also thanked the participants for the ceremony and stressed the need to pursue development cooperation between the municipality and URDA in the interest of the Choueifat region and its residents.

“The anniversary of independence is one of the glorious stations in the modern history of Lebanon in the interest of freedom and dignity and the restoration of people’s rights. The Prince of Independence, Majid Arslan, is a man who made history in letters from light and his face glowed with patriotism as he defended Lebanon and contributed to its independence.” said the representative of Prince Majid Arslan.

Finally, Prince Majid Arslan’s representative joined the crowd in cutting the ribbon and unveiling the national cedar, which represents Lebanon’s resilience, durability and persistence.