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embrace

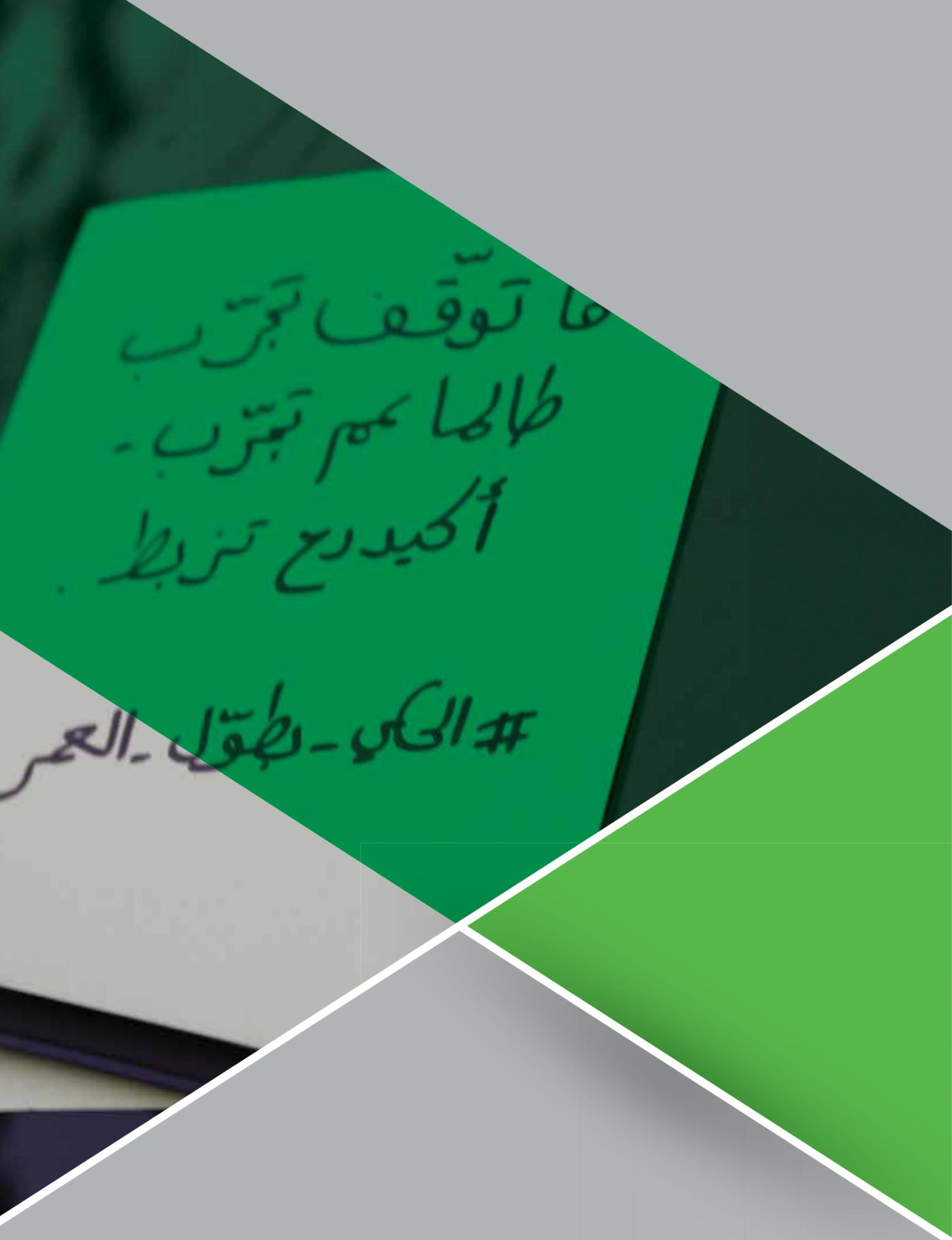


2019

ANNUAL REPORT

A Lebanon with mental health for all

”



2000+ persons reached in awareness and outreach efforts from across Lebanon



1276 callers experiencing emotional distress were supported through the Embrace Lifeline (1564)



625 callers at risk of suicide were provided assistance through the Embrace Lifeline (1564)



552 callers referred to community resources for further assistance (mental health services, basic assistance, food, shelter, and other services) through the Embrace Lifeline (1564)



50 volunteers trained to operate the national suicide prevention helpline Embrace Lifeline (1564)

TABLE OF Contents

- P. 01 Mission
- P. 02 Foreword
- P. 03 Priority Area 1:
Lebanon Talks About Mental Health
- P. 04 Priority Area 2:
Building a vocal and supportive community
- P. 05 Priority Area 3:
Saving Lives
- P. 06 Priority Area 4:
Building Lebanon's Capacity
- P. 06 Priority Area 5:
capturing and Expanding Data Analytics
and Research on Suicide (CEDARS)
- P. 07 Financial Summary
- P. 08 Donors and Partners

Mission

Ensure persons with mental illness are respected, empowered, and able to access appropriate care without the constraints of:

Lack of knowledge



POSITIVE REPRESENTATION

Shame

Through:

SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Limited resources



ALLIANCES WITH POLICYMAKERS

Foreword



We have come a long way in the field of mental health both nationally and internationally. What a time to be working in the field mental health. Globally, we have seen mental health at the forefront of government agendas, ministerial efforts and community concern. Despite its absence from government agendas in Lebanon, mental health has been given its due diligence by the Ministry of Public Health through the National Mental Health Program (NMHP). Moreover, the community concern Lebanese people have had, and particularly in the latest months of 2019 the most difficult of this year, is something to truly be inspired by. Unfortunately, in isolation there is only so much progress we can make and only so many ways we can support an individual. For a complete response, a person experiencing a struggle needs to be perceptive of their situation, willing to receive help, and there needs to be supportive interpersonal, community and policy factors. The current situation in Lebanon makes mental health all the more challenging. While organizations like Embrace work on individual needs and community awareness, and programs like the NMHP work on ministerial infrastructure there needs to be a government willing to invest in the proper implementation of programs. While this situation is disappointing, it also plays as a motivating factor that drives our work forward, as we constantly strive to fill the gaps in mental health in Lebanon. All of this comes at a time when Embrace is expanding the services of the Embrace Lifeline, our biggest project to date, to provide a more holistic approach to mental health that is in line with the NMHP's agenda. It is very important to me, that the public is commended for its adaptation to the Lifeline and its shift in behaviour and acceptance towards discussing mental health and suicide; without this community response, the Lifeline would not have achieved the success it has today. Throughout a year, the Lifeline has received national attention and international investment. Embrace has been a part of local coordination among organizations working on mental health, with the aim of responsibly distributing resources, avoiding duplication and addressing gaps. The attention the Embrace Lifeline has received locally has spread out to the region with discussions and consultations on the way to set up suicide helplines in other countries in the region. Whether Embrace exclusively participates in setting up any future suicide prevention efforts in the region I can confidently say Embrace has paved the way towards mental health awareness and suicide response in the region.

embrace is a powerful and fast force of change.

This is becoming more of a fact every day when people learn something new from Embrace whether through information or through operations. Embrace's worth is validating annually as we continue to be supported in the toughest of times. It is in these most difficult times and situations like Lebanon that the work of NGOs is crucial. I am excited about the bigger projects Embrace has in its pipeline and impressed to see our organization always find new ways to embrace the Lebanese community.

Lea Zeinoun, MPH
Executive Director, Embrace

Priority areas

Since 2013, Embrace has constantly aspired to fulfill its mission to create impact in a country where mental health has long been overlooked.

Since its inception, Embrace has worked to achieve its mission through raising awareness in the community on mental health, creating grassroots channels which advocate for and support the rights of persons with lived experience with mental illness.

Embrace is continuously working to build capacity among community members and future mental health professionals to improve the field of mental health in Lebanon through research and delivery of services, and provide direct support to persons affected by ill mental health and risk of suicide.



Priority area #1 Lebanon talks about mental health

10,452 messages of support
across Lebanon on
World Mental Health Day
October 2019

On October 10th 2019, Embrace launched a national campaign under the title #TalkingSavesLives, this time making an effort to personally reach as many people as possible across different areas of Lebanon. The campaign was an outreach initiative launched by Embrace's devoted and passionate volunteers. The team wrote 10,452 positive messages in English, Arabic, French and Armenian with the aim of engaging at least 10,452 people; with a resemblance to our countries geographic area. The cards were all hand written over a period of two weeks, and personally distributed by the team during the night of October 9, 2019 so people wake up the morning of October 10th, World Mental Health Day, to find these cards on their cars.

We reached areas from the North to the South of Lebanon, including Tripoli, Batroun, Jbeil, Jounieh, Zouk Mosbeh, Zouk Mikayel, Kaslik, Jal el Dib, Zalka, Jdeideh, Burj Hammoud, Roumieh, Broumana, Shahhar, Beit Mery, Furn el Chebek, Badaro, Ashrafieh, Mar Mkhael, Gemmayze, Ain el Mreisseh, Hamra, Raouche, Verdun, Mar Elias, Mazraa, Basta, Dahiyeh, Tyre and Sidon.



The campaign reach

The campaign had a nation-wide impact and was covered on the front-page of the print version of Annahar newspaper, billboard coverage of the front page across Lebanon on PROMOMEDIA billboards, and hundreds of people sharing their cards on social media tagging Embrace, with several other people calling Embrace to express their gratitude. Television programs and news segments requested interviews with Embrace to discuss the campaign on prime time shows. Following the campaign, several private institutions such as Diwan El Hachem Restaurant- Zalka, Beirut Digital District- Bechara El Khoury, Café Hamra- Hamra and Zeitouna Bay branches, and Cozmo Café- Zaitouna Bay requested we replicate the campaign within their spaces.

There was also a substantial increase in overall reach, as the recorded numbers were 165k on Instagram (+154%) and 187k on Facebook (244%). This success on social media reflects the success of the campaign in the realms of reality and is due to people's positive perceptions of the campaign, as a large portion of the increase in followers and engagement rates is likely due to mentions and shares via stories and direct messaging.

The campaign impact

On October 10, the day the campaign was introduced on social media channels

Instagram
witnessed a



25
%

increase
in total followers

Facebook
witnessed a



04
%

increase
in total followers

Embrace on the wide screens



Embrace collaborated with Grand Cinemas for the screening of its promotional video highlighting the Embrace Lifeline (1564) which is now available on Embrace's YouTube page. The promotional video was screened during the months of June and July 2019 at Grand Cinemas (Verdun, Ashrafieh, and Dbayeh). With this collaboration, Grand Cinemas helped raise awareness among a large audience, about the availability of the Embrace Lifeline (1564) as a national resource for any person struggling with suicidal ideation and mental health difficulties.



2019 Community awareness and outreach efforts

Embrace's Awareness and Outreach Department engages in yearly outreach activities throughout Lebanon with the aim of spreading community awareness on mental health and encouraging help seeking behavior. The sessions cover topics including general mental health knowledge, causes of stress, signs and symptoms, risk and protective factors and tips to improve mental well-being. Additionally, this year Embrace has adopted a new awareness approach under the title "Talking Trees", which encourages the conversation on mental health experiences around a comfortable permanent setting within a community. In 2019, Embrace reached schools, universities, municipalities, youth groups and public spaces across the governorates of Beirut, Bekaa, North, South, and Mount Lebanon in the regions of Aley, Chouf, Jbeil, Keserwan and Matn.

> 2000 persons
reached in awareness activities

Embrace engaged an empowered

> 400
School students

> 1000
University students and
different youth groups

> 300
Adults from municipalities

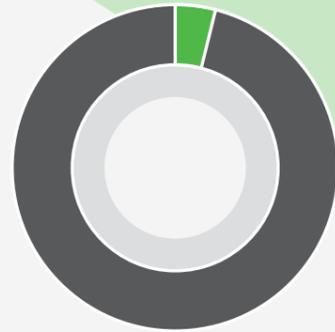
> 235
Adults in the workplace
from various corporations

Audience reached were from various regions across Lebanon

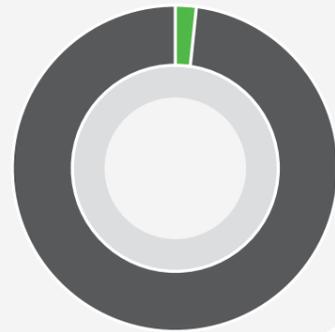
28% Beirut



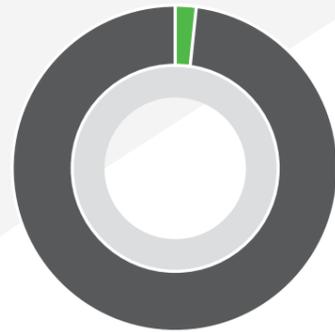
4% South



2% Shouf



2% Bekaa



52% Mount Lebanon



13% North



2019 Awareness Lebanon talks about mental health



Embrace at Aley Municipality



Embrace at Lebanese University, Hadath



Embrace at Haigazian University



Embrace at Carmel Saint Joseph School



2019 Awareness Lebanon talks about mental health



Embrace with Guides du Liban



Embrace at B.Hive, Hamra



Embrace at College Notre Dame



Embrace at Lebanese Girls Guide Association, group Frères Maristes Jbeil



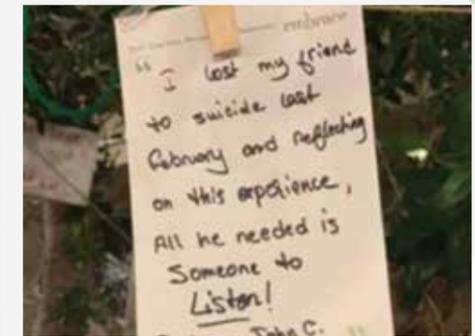
2019 Awareness Lebanon talks about mental health



Embrace at TEDx, LAU



Embrace's Talking Trees, B Hive Café Hamra



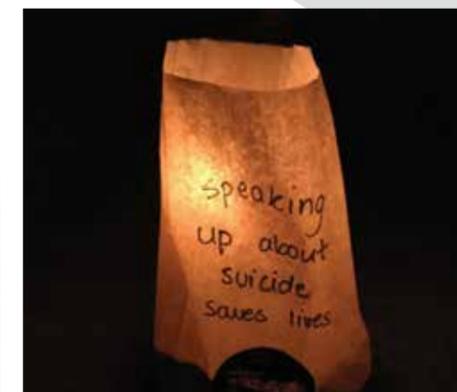
Embrace with La Troupe Peaux-Rouges du groupe Mont La Salle



Priority area #2 Building a vocal and supportive community

Walking «Into the Dawn» 2019

Launched in 2013, Embrace's "Into the Dawn Walk" has become an annual event, nationally recognizing World Suicide Prevention Day (September 10). "Into the Dawn" is a suicide memorial walk and advocacy initiative intended to foster an environment of support for those affected by suicide. The event harbors a peaceful and calm environment, starting out at dawn on a Sunday morning, and takes participants through a brief 1 KM walk experience where they are invited to reflect on suicide within our community and share their messages of hope and items of keepsake around a physical wall at the end of the walk in remembrance of the people we have lost to suicide. This year's walk was held on Sunday September 8 at 5:00 AM in Raouche, with over 300 participants.



Growing Partners & Building Alliances

Facebook partners with Embrace for extended suicide prevention via social media



After extensive research and conversation, Facebook and Embrace recognise that social media is being used as a major outlet for personal expression. This is an important finding in the Middle East and in Lebanon, as mental health is rarely discussed and suicide linked to religious and social taboos.

The Facebook Middle East and North Africa (MENA) team has documented alarming and concerning trends on Facebook and Instagram whereby users experiencing emotional distress and/or having suicidal ideation have been posting about this on their profiles.

With an aim to respond to such posts in an ethical and supportive manner, Facebook launched a Suicide and Self Injury (SSI) team and reached out to local efforts and expertise in different contexts to combine the best in mind and experience. Embrace was among the selected groups representing Lebanon.

Embrace and Facebook tailored the response pathway to emotional distress and/or suicide posts for Lebanon application users. The new pathway changes the action "report" to "support" as a first step towards decreasing the stigma surrounding mental health and suicide.



The pathway also gives the application user several options such as a link to an informative tool and direction to the Embrace Lifeline, and it takes into account the possibility of the user reaching out on behalf of a friend or family member who is in emotional distress and/or suicidal ideation. This pathway has helped many so far who have been encouraged by Facebook to call the Embrace Lifeline.

As part of a continued response, Embrace is working closely with the SSI team to develop policies to standardise the response to mental health posts in a way that protects the individual experiencing a struggle while ensuring minimal harm on other application users.

Embrace collaborates with international organizations for local development

Embrace has partnered with international organizations working locally on improving the mental well-being of individuals living in Lebanon. Embrace is part of a consortium managed by Medecins du Monde that has launched two community mental health centers, one in Baalbek and one in Tripoli. The Embrace Lifeline acts as one of the sources of referral, orienting callers who reach out to the Embrace Lifeline and who are living in these areas to further needed mental health services.

In 2019, Embrace also partnered with ACTED, an international NGO committed to immediate humanitarian relief to support those in urgent need and promote inclusive and sustainable growth. In Lebanon, ACTED has been supporting several local NGOs including Embrace. Through external funding from Agence France de Development, ACTED has supported Embrace in its own organizational structure and capacity building skills needed to expand the Embrace Lifeline availability to operate 24/7 in 2020.

Growing Partners & Building Alliances

Talking mental health at the Lebanese International Film Festival (LIFF)

The Lebanese Independent Film Festival (LIFF) partnered with Embrace to launch the LIFF 2019 Festival edition. The theme this year was centered on mental health. This was an exciting opportunity for Embrace to raise awareness on mental health and familiarize people with the work of the organization. The festival kicked off with an opening ceremony on September 11, and a closing ceremony on September the 15, which included local and international jury members. This year the LIFF received over 900 submissions from over 87 countries. The programming included selected films from the Toronto International Film Festival, the International Film Festival of Rotterdam, the Venice Film Festival, Cannes Film Festival, VISIONS du REEL, Etas Generaux du Film Documentaires and more that showcase diverse aspects of mental health and illness.



Running to save lives

In February 2019, Embrace in collaboration with Humans Without Borders NGO, launched a crowdfunding campaign to raise awareness about the Embrace Lifeline (1564) and collect funds to contribute to making it available 24/7 in 2020. Marwa Awad, the cofounder of Humans Without Borders, took on the challenge of running the Beirut Saradar Women's Race in March 2019 with the cause of Embrace in mind, and to help raise a portion (\$24,700) of the funds needed to make Embrace's emotional support and suicide prevention helpline which at the time operated 14 hours, a 24/7 reality. Through her campaign Marwa and in collaboration with the Embrace team advocated for the Embrace cause across different channels, engaging friends and family, corporations such as Khoury Home, Tinol Paints, and United Petroleum, and many local figures who were introduced to the mission of Embrace and proudly supported the campaign.

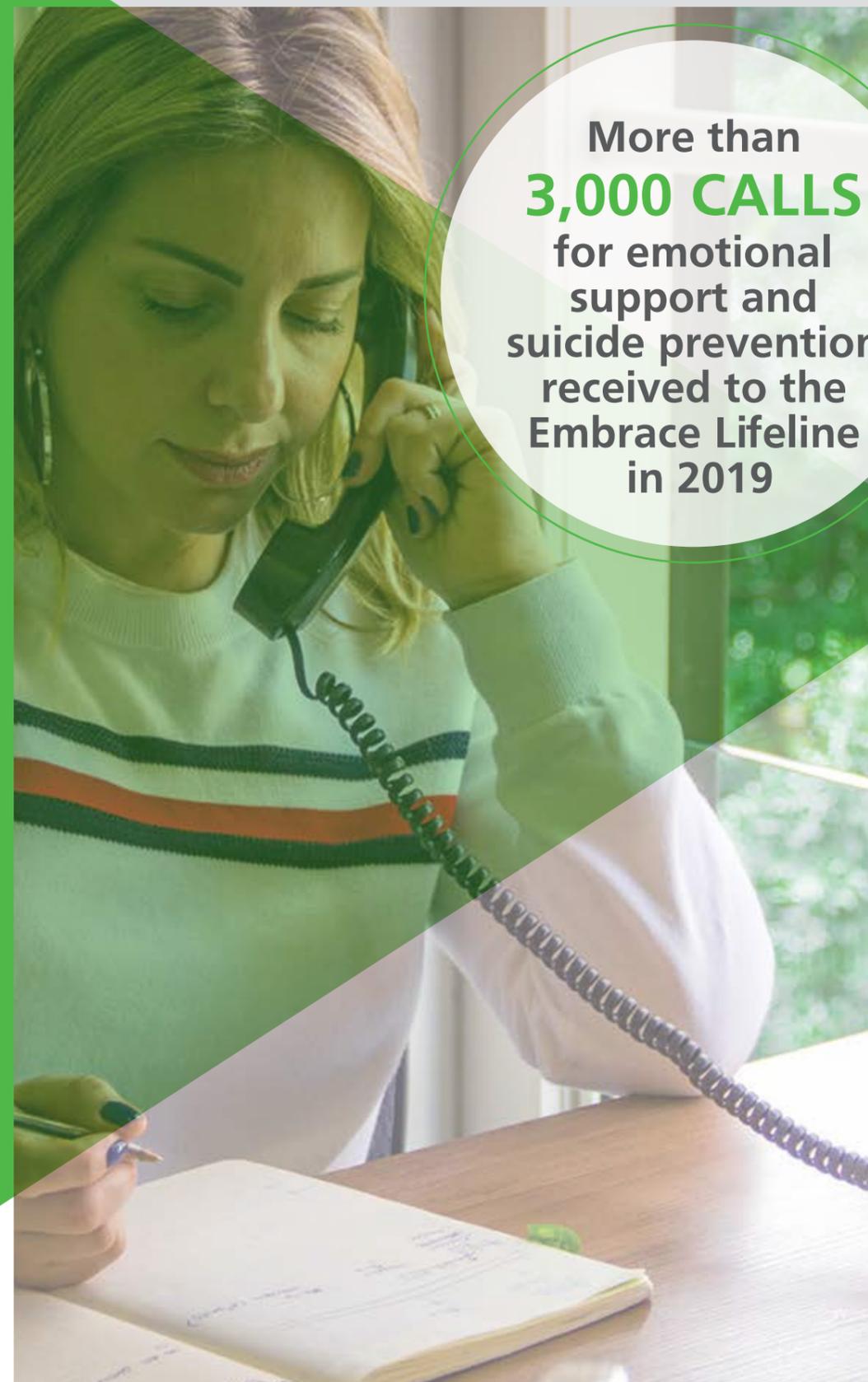


Marwa made it to the finish line on March 31st 2019 in 1 hour and 26 seconds! The campaign was successful in raising \$21,305 and valuable awareness. The campaign could not have been successful without the contribution of all the donors.

Building a Vocal & Supportive Community

Connecting with nature for better mental health: Embrace the trails tradition

Embrace held its yearly hike on June 29th, where 230 supporters of Embrace's cause explored the trails of Baskinta on a hike to Qanat Bakish where they gathered for dinner and a yoga session in the beautiful nature of Baskinta. Every year, the hike gathers supporters from all over Lebanon, in an activity aimed to bring people from different walks of life together, to enhance social connectivity in the outdoors, discover Lebanon, and talk about mental health. The hikers embraced the trails and discovered a breath-taking piece of Lebanon, enjoyed a meditation and yoga session at sunset, and connected with nature, with strangers, and with themselves over cozy bonfires. Embrace's 2019 hike was generously sponsored by: Moon Monkey Lebanon, Sports 4ever, Red Bull, Humans without Borders, Fayek, Liban Du Jus (Maccaw Juices), Benlian, Croissant 7 Days, Low Cal Diet, Ticket to the Moon, Zey Yoga and YOLO (You Only Live Once).



More than
3,000 CALLS
for emotional
support and
suicide prevention
received to the
Embrace Lifeline
in 2019

Priority area #3 Saving lives

1564

Embrace Lifeline (1564)

In 2019, Embrace Lifeline's operations reached a significantly wide target population across Lebanon, with an estimated 2239 registered calls received between January and December 2019, and a total of more than 3000 calls (including non-registered ones). In addition to tens of persons who were assisted over the phone from immediate life-threatening danger who had called the helpline during, or immediately after a life-threatening suicide attempt. Since October, 2019 Lebanon has been witnessing difficult times and unstable social and economic conditions. Simultaneously, the media reported consecutive cases of death to suicide within Lebanon. Throughout the month of December 2019, the country was collectively talking about suicide and sharing the Embrace Lifeline number 1564 encouraging people to reach out for help. In light of these circumstances, and in the midst of the protests Lebanon has been witnessing, the Embrace Lifeline was sought out for support more than ever since its launch in 2017. For two weeks after December 4th, the Embrace Lifeline received over 100 calls a day, compared to the previous average of 7 calls a day. To continue to support all callers within Lebanon, Embrace took several measures to increase its capacity of response and ensure a high population reach. The Embrace Lifeline increased its operational capacity to receive 3 to 5 calls simultaneously at any given time during operational hours, as compared to 2 simultaneous calls. Moreover, the need to be available for longer hours became urgent and operational hours increased to become available 17.5 hours a day; from 12:00PM to 5:30AM. Additionally, to increase awareness about the availability of the Embrace Lifeline to all citizens, PROMOMEDIA supported Embrace to run a billboard campaign with the message, "During these difficult times, We are here to listen. 1564."



Priority area #4 Building Lebanon's mental health capacity

50 new volunteers trained to operate the Embrace Lifeline (1564)

Throughout 2019, the Embrace Lifeline held its 7th and 8th operator training on "Active Listening and Collaborative Intervention in Suicidal Crises". The training is an intensive 40-hour program designed to empower volunteers with the necessary skills to manage calls received to the Embrace Lifeline as operators. The training content provides a general overview on mental health, and focuses on the process and procedures used under the Embrace Lifeline support service.

Both trainings helped built the capacity of 50 additional volunteers. Today the Embrace Lifeline is run by more than 75 active and dedicated operators. Since its launching, Embrace Lifeline has trained more than 200 volunteers who have become experts in providing emotional support, active listening, psychological first aid and assessing and intervening in suicide risk.



Building capacity of Lebanese NGOs

Embrace is active in conducting capacity building sessions with local and international non-governmental organizations with the aim of raising awareness on mental health, dispelling myths and enhancing effective and evidence-based responses to suicide crises. Capacity building trainings are offered to organisations working in the humanitarian field with missions overlapping with mental health and vulnerable populations. Embrace provided capacity building workshops for Himaya working on child protection, MARCH working to promote social cohesion and personal freedoms, Amel Association supporting underprivileged populations and Medecins du Monde which provides mental health services in Lebanon.



Building capacity of Lebanon's youth Embrace Internship Program

Embrace hosts several internship programs, and many of its activities are run and coordinated by dedicated interns and practicum students who are further trained and supported by Embrace to deliver and coordinate many of the core activities of the organization. In 2019, Embrace hosted a total of 5 interns pursuing their graduate and bachelor degrees in various areas and activities including research internships, project coordination, communications and IT.

Embrace from Germany

A working exchange to address challenges and prevent suicide in the Middle East

Embrace was invited to Berlin by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) for the working exchange «Challenges and Chances for Suicide Prevention in the Middle East- Identifying Ways Forward». Embrace's Executive Director, Lea Zeinoun and Research Assistant, Serene Yordi attended the working exchange where they presented the work of the National Mental Health Program at the Ministry of Public Health as well as the work of the Embrace Lifeline (1564). The knowledge shared by the Embrace team highlighted Lebanon's advanced work in the field of mental health compared to neighbouring Arab Countries and set a standard of practice for many countries to work towards implementing.



Embrace and Facebook meet in New York for suicide prevention

Embrace's Executive Director, Lea Zeinoun, was invited to be part of Facebook's- In Person- Suicide and Self Injury (SSI) meeting in New York. Embrace joined the SSI committee in 2019 and participates throughout the year in online discussions of suicide and self- injury topics as relevant on the Facebook platform. The meeting held in October 2019 brought together experts from Thailand, the UK, Finland, Brazil, India, the US and more. The aim of the meeting was to gather insights and best practice towards the development of a policy on suicide and self- injury cases as received or detected by Facebook from its users.



Inside the Facebook offices in New York

Priority area #5

Embrace launches CEDARS

(Capturing and Expanding Data Analytics and Research on Suicide)

Embrace launches CEDARS

Embrace proudly launched its research hub - Capturing and Expanding Data Analytics and Research on Suicide - CEDARS. Comprised of dedicated researchers, and directed by Dr. Pia Zeinoun, the hub aims at providing insights into the behaviors of those who call the Embrace Lifeline. Through a deep-dive understanding of the reported individual and social factors that contribute to suicidal behavior and distress, and by identifying the way in which the Embrace Lifeline helps people feel better, Embrace can inform policy makers, and contribute meaningfully to worldwide research and practice. Monthly infographics gathered from the Embrace Helpline are now available on Embrace's website.

Team members



Dr. Pia Zeinoun
(Director and Founder, CEDARS)



Dr. Farah Yehia
(Head of Research)



Ms. Serene Yordi
(Research Assistant)



Ms. Lila Khederlalian
(Research Assistant)

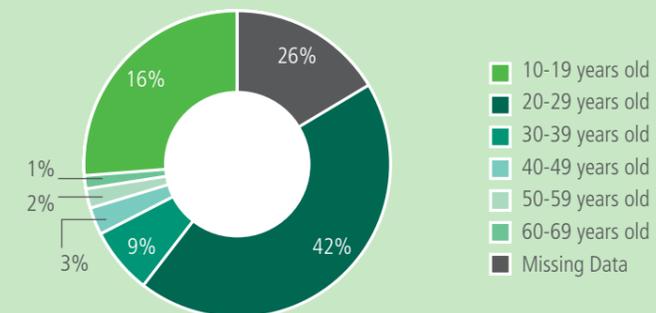
Supporting Team

- Ms. Lea Zeinoun
- Ms. Mia Atwi
- Dr. Omar Ghosn
- Dr. Ziad Nahas

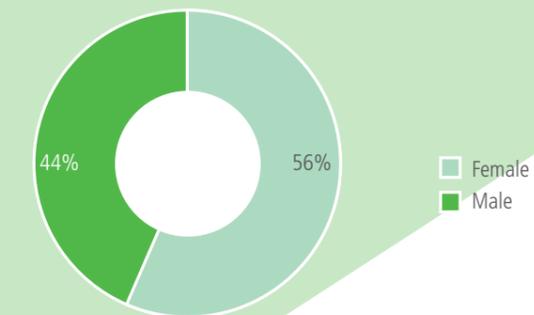
Who is calling the Embrace lifeline (1564)?

The below data covers the time period between January 2019 and December 2019

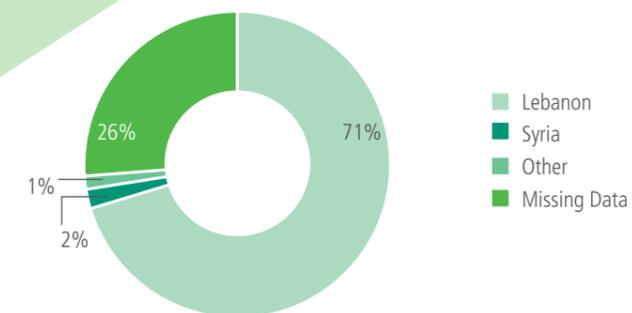
Break-down by age of callers reaching out to the Embrace Lifeline



Females were more likely to reach out to the Embrace Lifeline in 2019, with a prevalence of 56%



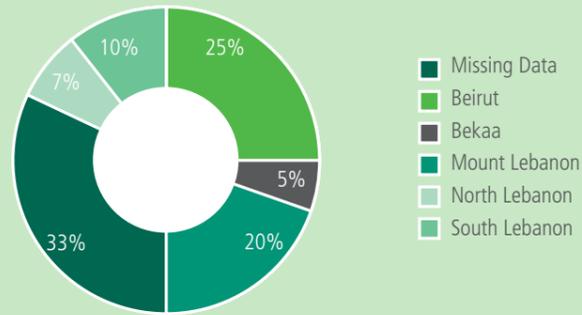
Most callers to the Embrace Lifeline are of Lebanese Nationality (71%)



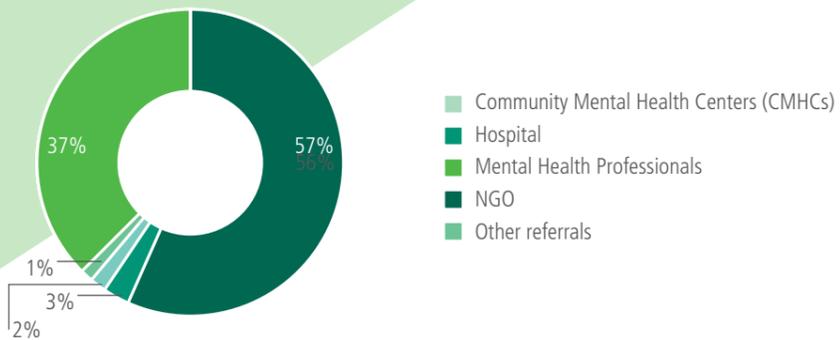
Who is calling the Embrace lifeline (1564)?

The below data covers the time period between January 2019 and December 2019

The majority of documented callers who reach out to the Embrace Lifeline are from the capital Beirut.



In 2019, 455 referrals were given to callers who needed orientation to mental health services in the community.



Talking mental health and suicide prevention to the Arab World

In March of this year, Embrace's Vice President Ms Mia Atoui, represented the country's efforts in mental health and suicide in the 3rd Annual Conference & Expo organized by the Middle East Psychological Association in Kuwait. The conference had two events, a talk in Lebanon and the conference discussion in Kuwait. Both days gathered many renowned mental health practitioners, non-governmental organizations and concerned community members discussing access to mental health support, service design, specialized clinically focused programs, mental health in the workplaces, disorder management and suicide prevention.



Talking mental health and suicide prevention in Europe

Embrace was invited to participate in the Religion and Medical Ethics Conference held in Rome in December 2019, which was organized by the World Innovation Summit for Health (WISH) an initiative of Qatar Foundation and the Pontifical Academy for Life (PAL) in Rome.



This special symposium examines the role that religion plays in providing holistic care in the context of medical ethics and palliative care. Embrace's Vice President, Mia Atoui, moderated a panel on suicide in the elderly population and presented the work of the Embrace Lifeline to an international community of mental health experts.

How has the Embrace lifeline (1564) helped save lives?



I just wanna say thank you from the bottom of my heart. Couple of days I called and I was hitting the rock bottom. I attempted to commit suicide and then called you... you guys helped a lot, and I've felt much better since then. Your work is professional and helpful... **I shared your number with some friends too. Keep going!**



Thank you for everything you are doing. Each volunteer is a life saver. **can't wait to be 21 to join your team.** Keep up with the good work. You are blessed.



You saved my life once again.



Thank you so much for everything that you do!! Today was the first time ever calling the lifeline and it was the best phone call I ever did. I called regarding someone who I think needs my help and ended up talking about my own problems as well. You guys are doing the best thing that someone can do. Emotional support is way more important than people assume. Thank you, thank you, thank you.



Thank you for everything. It's not the first time that you save me.



Today was the first time I called embrace. It is the best thing in the world. I feel way better and they are so helpful. **I was hesitating at first, but I am glad I called.**



Thank you for saving my life yesterday.



How has the Embrace lifeline (1564) helped save lives?



Thank you so much for existing! I've never been this weak in my life, but when I contacted you, you put a smile on my face. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you. **I am feeling positive!**



I called you once, you were great guys, Responsive. Love you for doing this. **Embrace is one of the things that makes Lebanon beautiful.** I wish I can be part of that team.



It was life changing. It is good that something like embrace exists in the country, not only for me but for everyone who needs to talk and be listened to. If I hadn't seen the number on the internet and didn't call, I don't want to know or imagine what would have happened. Thank you."



Dear Embrace Operators,

I honestly feel shy and embarrassed to keep calling you. I feel like I am interrupting your work because you spend so much energy talking to me. Sometimes we spend a long time over the phone because I feel no one can help me, but at least with you I feel relaxed. It is enough for me that there is someone who can listen to me.

You are an amazing team and your work is beyond wonderful.

Best wishes to all of you and thank you.

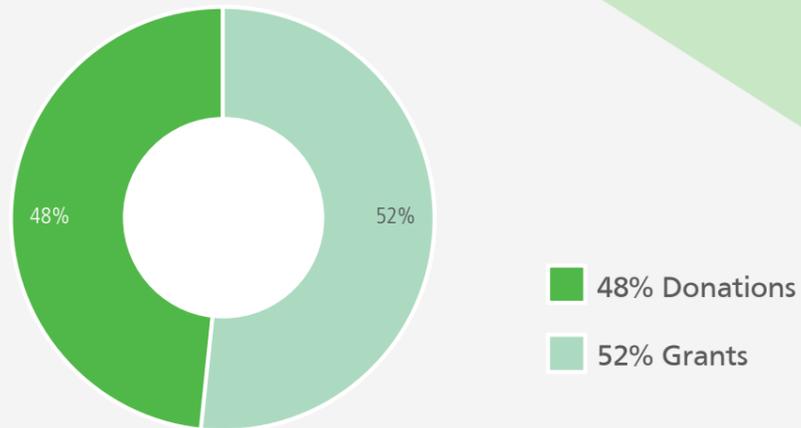


It is enough for me that there is someone who can listen to me.

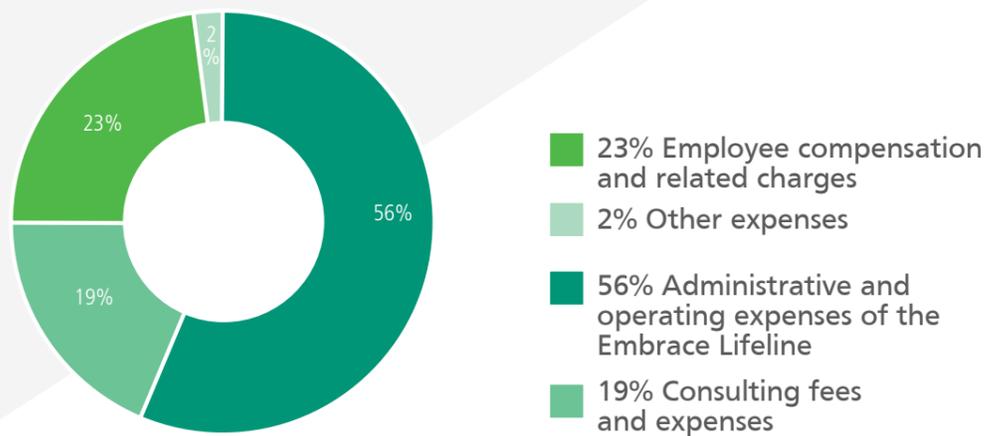


2019 funding

Funds received
\$141, 561



Expenses
\$154, 246



Embrace's financial audit is conducted by Sarkis Sakr & Partners

Donors and partners

2019 partners of Embrace



2019 Friends of Embrace



2019 Supporters of Embrace



In 2019, Embrace was supported by Grants from AFD (Agence France de Development) ACTED

Thank you to our partners and donors and many of whom wished to remain anonymous.

Embrace could not have done all this without you.

“

embrace

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TALKING SAVES LIVES

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