



embrace



# ANNUAL REPORT 2021

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**“SHE STOOD IN THE STORM,  
AND WHEN THE WIND DID  
NOT BLOW HER WAY, SHE  
ADJUSTED HER SAILS.”**

ELIZABETH EDWARDS



# FORWARD

The wind didn't blow our way, or any way that we had anticipated... 2021 has been an excruciating test of resistance, not resilience, for every individual, family, and institution in Lebanon and every Lebanese abroad. The fierce storm metamorphized itself and appeared to have grown further than a passing "nature-made" one, to a rather monstrous well-sown plan to disintegrate the core of our society's being. We have been living through what our witnesses of history call: The Worst Socio-Economic Crisis in the history of Lebanon; fuel and food shortage, reigning darkness, rising unemployment and immigration of skill & talents, deterioration of the Lebanese Pound... It was apparent that we were and still are in a state of higher emergency.

You walk the streets, and you can't help but see worrisome anxious faces, closed doors of shops and restaurants that carry between their walls so many precious memories, masked people queuing outside bank doors and ATMs, spray paint with the words "Justice for our victims" and ads that offer money counting machines at "affordable" prices. There has been heaviness, too much of it, and it feels like we are being stripped out of our own identities.

Embrace exists so that no person has to go through their darkest hours alone. We sensed those cries for help, outside and behind closed doors, with people suffering loudly or in silence. Imagine if these cries were not heard nor answered; if those struggling didn't know that they had a nearby "embrace" to hold them, or maybe didn't even realize that their Mental Health was at stake and needed to be given the right attention.

As the storm became harsher, we adjusted our sails, exploring and implementing practical solutions that will keep us going, and may I say growing. What did we do? We listened, anticipated, and acted with self-determination to attend to the rising needs of our community and provide the support needed both digitally and in practice.

The National Emotional Support and Suicide Prevention Hotline 1564 (Page X), operating at 21 hours a day with over 150 volunteers, supported almost 10,000 callers, despite severe and stressful power cuts and fuel shortages. Yes, 10,000 calls, a 61% increase from 2020 and 340% increase from 2019! Allow me here to take a bow to the incredible souls behind those phones: Our Volunteer Hopemakers, who remained committed to their mission, while they themselves might have been struggling amidst the crisis. Our Outreach & Awareness plans (Page Y) were set in place and executed to expand further the culture of mental health knowledge, openness, and empowerment across the country with almost 3000 individuals reached in 2021 and 17,000 reached across the years. The Embrace Mental Health Center (Page W) celebrated its one-year anniversary in September with over 5,500 consultations provided in 2021, and hundreds of medications needs and hospitalizations covered for our beneficiaries. Our communications department (Page C) creatively and proactively stepped up to the responsibility by growing the digital community, responding to the volatile environment, and providing direct and indirect awareness and support via online and offline portals. Our research team (Page B) made sure to continue to produce scientific data to understand our reach, impact, and assess our goals, and published in 2021 the first study on the effectiveness of Lebanon's National Lifeline 1564 which was presented in our National Conference in December, along with another pillar study on the Prevalence of Suicide in Lebanon. Internally and in parallel, Business Support (Page A) instilled a solid structure to a growing organization and implemented technologically advanced systems and solutions to develop our work and better monitor our impact.

None of the above would have been possible without solid long-term strategic partnerships (Page Z) with our donors and supporters across the world. In fact, one of the highlights of 2021 was the celebration of Embrace's work and our partnership with AFD which took place in Paris as part of their 80th-anniversary event.

Alongside our donors and partners, both the growth we achieved and the impact we are presenting were a direct result of diligent, passionate, and committed 200+ volunteers and team members that rose to the challenges, aimed high, and worked relentlessly to keep the Embrace mission alive.

2022 will be about internal wellness and solidified structures as much as external development. "The Wellness Initiative" (Page X) when implemented will act as a doorway to self-care and internal staff wellbeing. As we also strive towards self-sustainability, and with rising social and structural barriers, Embrace is committed to reaching those who cannot reach us, through new and innovative tools that we can't wait to reveal to you in 2022. We will also be rebuilding souls inside companies and organizations in Lebanon and the region with our newly launched multi-faceted "Mental Health Journey" that will tackle every aspect of Mental Health in the workplace from basic awareness to targeted therapeutic interventions, going through uplifts of workspaces and policies.

Our storm shall pass, and we will keep adjusting our sails to follow through with our vision.

I leave you with this question though: How much longer can mental health organizations keep adjusting their sails when basic socio-economic determinants are non-existent and governmental systems are not in place?

**Hiba Dandachli**  
**Director of Communications**

# OUR STORY SO FAR

## MISSION

To ensure that mental health and access to care are positioned as a basic human right that must be met for all persons, through awareness, advocacy, and dignified mental health services across the spectrum of care.

## VISION

All persons in Lebanon pursue a better mental health and can reach dignified access to care without social, personal and structural barriers.

## PILLARS

- **THE LIFELINE 1564**
- **THE EMBRACE MENTAL HEALTH CENTER - EMHC**
- **AWARENESS AND OUTREACH**
- **RESEARCH HUB & CEDARS**





# THE LIFELINE

National Emotional Support and Suicide Prevention Hotline

2021 marked our 4th year of operating Lebanon's National Emotional Support and Suicide Prevention Hotline (1564) in collaboration with the National Mental Health Program at the Ministry of Public Health. With zero lives lost to date, our goal has remained to maximize the availability of the National Lifeline reaching 21 hours a day, 7 days a week, so that no person is left suffering alone.

As any other organization in Lebanon, our team faced many challenges - both personal and external - however because of these challenges, and not despite them, the Lifeline managed to continue operating as close to regular as possible with minimal cuts, culminating in a number of calls nearing 10,000, representing a 61% increase from 2020 and a 340% increase from 2019. The Lifeline's support goes beyond the calls we receive and into a more holistic mental health approach, beginning with a 24/7 operation in March 2022 that allows us to provide more durable and accessible mental health services to all. Around 100 of our callers were redirected through social work services to ensure people in need receive continued support.

## INCREASING OUR OPERATION HOURS TO SAVE MORE LIVES

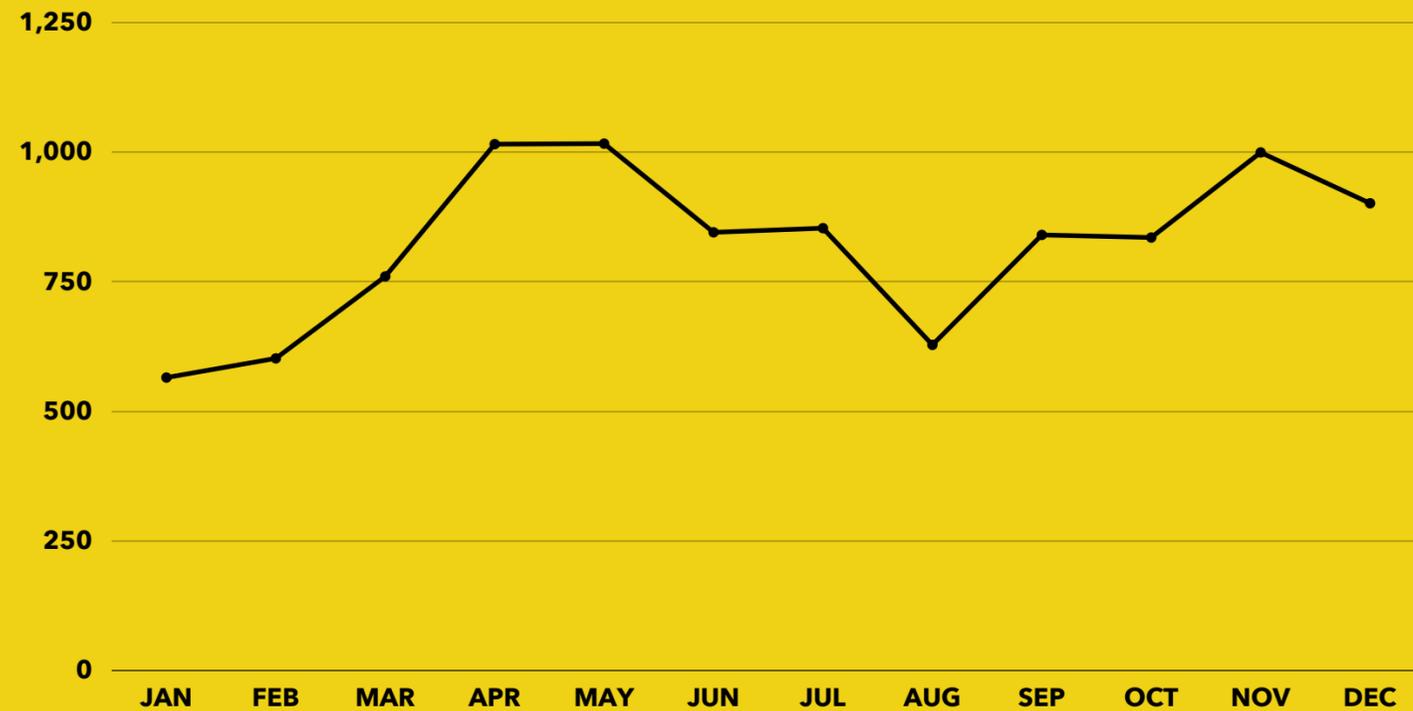
Year	Hours of Operation/Day	Total Number of Calls	% Increase*
2018	14 Hours	1590	-
2019	14 Hours	2239	41%
2020	17.4 Hours	6132	170%
2021	Jan-Mar 17.5 Hours Apr-Dec 21 Hours	9859	61%
2022	24 HOURS!		



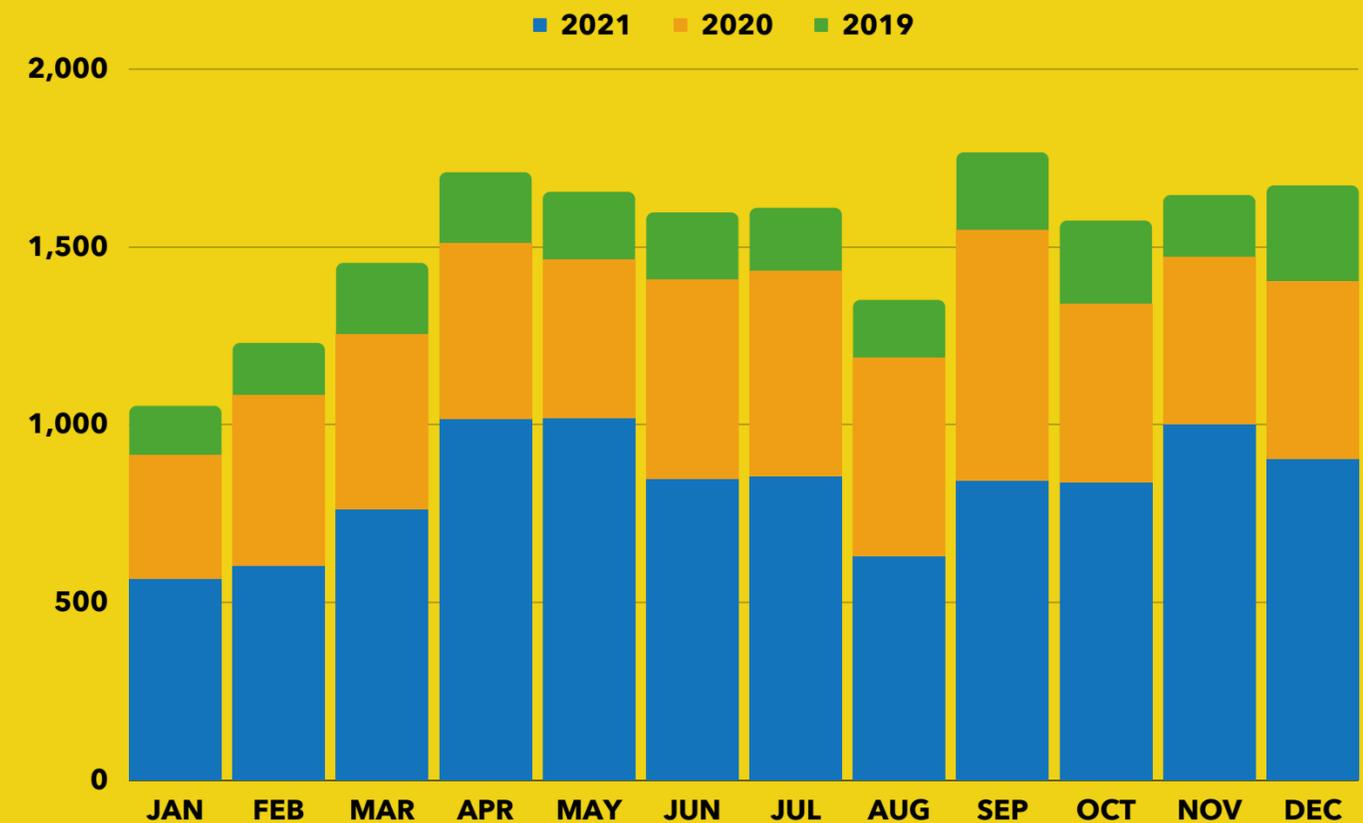
Lebanese Republic  
Ministry of Public Health  
National Mental Health Programme

# SAVING LIVES IN 2021

**CALLS REGISTERED IN 2021 PER MONTH**

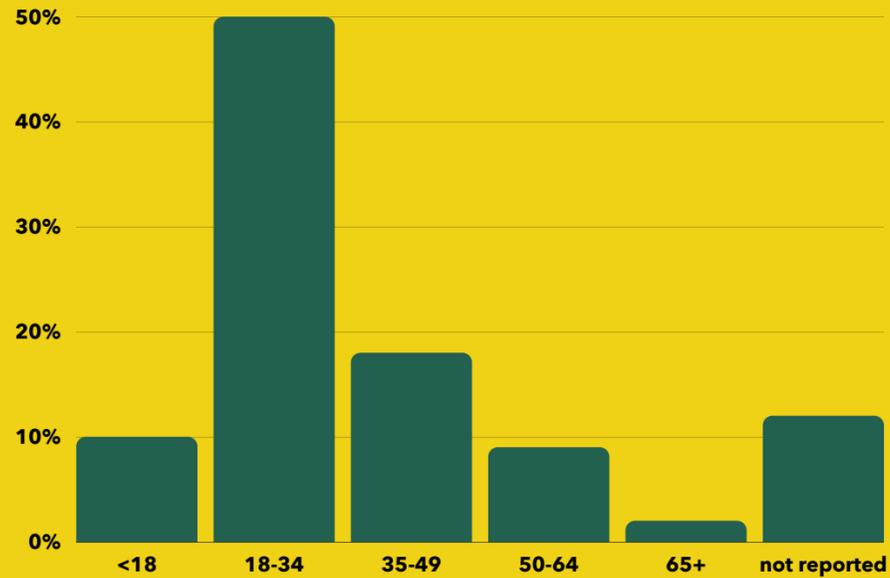


**COMPARATIVE REGISTERED  
CALLS ACROSS THE PAST 3 YEARS**



It is hypothesized that the surge in the number of calls that occurred in April 2021 and relatively stabilized since, was mainly due to the increase in the Lifeline operating hours from 17.5 hours in March to 21 hours in April, as well as the further deterioration in the socio-economic situation, rise in covid cases and strict lockdown measures. July and August tended to be more sensitive and an increase in need of support as well as calls were anticipated, as we came to the 1-year anniversary of the Beirut Blast. However, there was a slight drop in July and an even bigger drop in August which came as a result of several interruptions in the Lifeline service. Electricity cuts and fuel shortages hindered the activity of the Lifeline for several consecutive days until drastic measures were taken and solutions were put in place to bring it back on track.

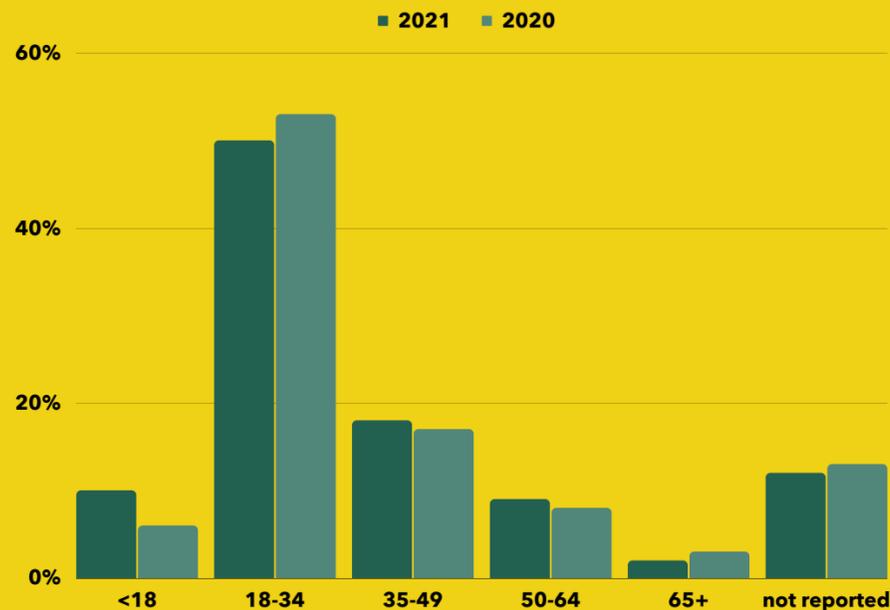
## CALLERS AGE GROUP DISTRIBUTION IN 2021



The highest number of call to the Lifeline is coming from the youth and adults

The highest percentage of calls came from individuals between the ages of 18 and 34 followed by those between the ages of 35 and 49.

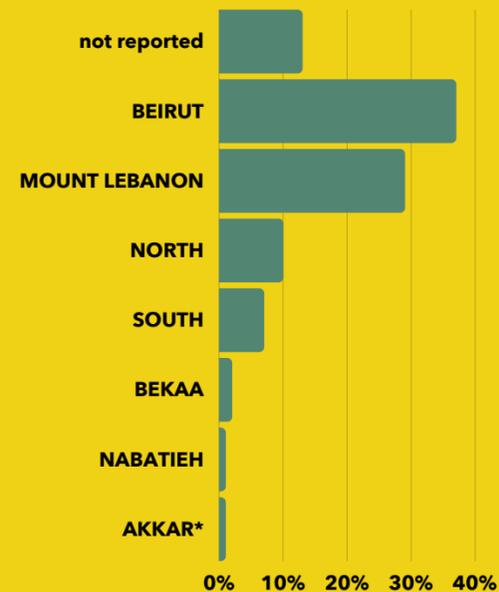
## COMPARISON IN CALLERS AGES ACROSS CALLS RECEIVED IN 2020 AND 2021



Generally, the age distribution across calls received was the same across the past two years, with the majority of calls coming from individuals between the ages of 18 and 34 followed by those between the ages of 35 and 49. In 2021, across calls with available data the average age was 31 years old.

Younger age groups are amongst our highest group of callers highlighting the need for emotional and mental health support for this segment of the population, however, the need is also great among older and younger age groups. A communication and outreach strategy is being developed to increase awareness about the Lifeline to various vulnerable groups as well as across all governorates.

## AREA DISTRIBUTION OF CALLERS ACROSS CALLS IN 2021



\*Akkar was added as a response category in mid-June 2021, it was previously recorded as part of the Northern Governorate.

The highest percentage of calls came from individuals residing in Beirut followed by individuals residing in Mount Lebanon.



# A FEW HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2021

42%

of calls with available data (n=7,388) were from individuals who reported to be **unemployed**

198

lives have been saved through the Lifeline

while in 2% of calls, the caller was at **imminent risk** in an ongoing attempt.

in  
32%

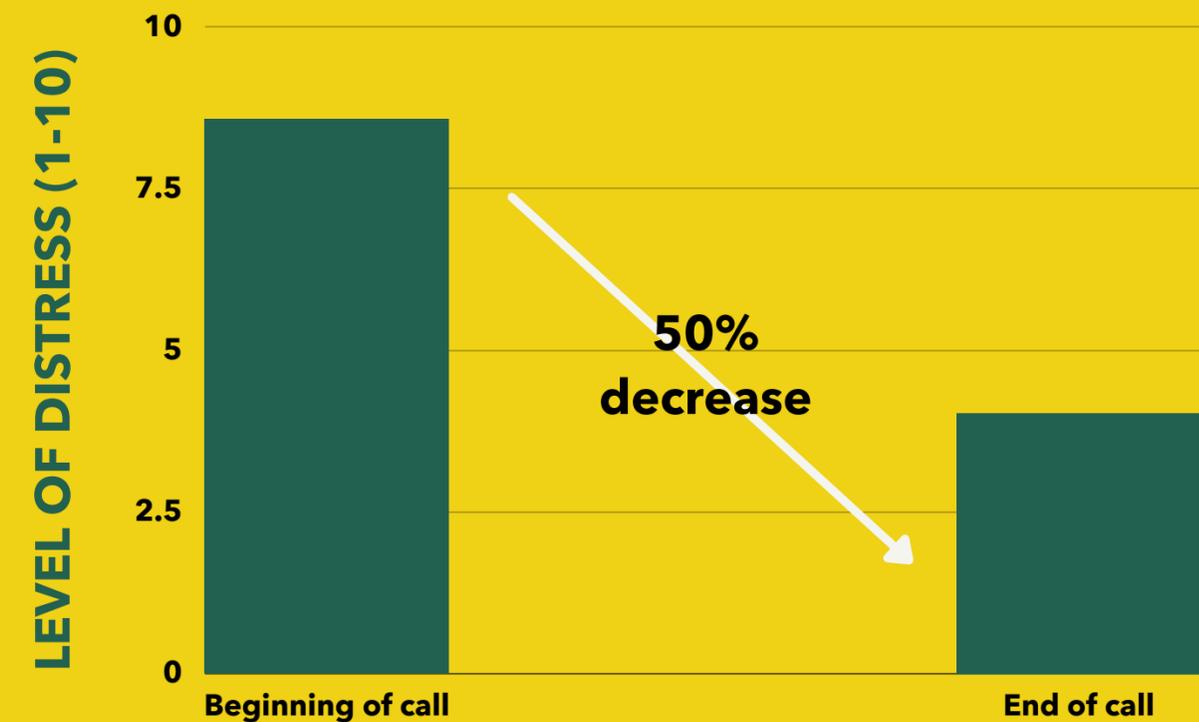
of calls with available data (n=8279) the caller expressed experiencing **active suicidal ideation/thinking**

Callers most often reported learning about the Lifeline through social media, followed by word of mouth (family/friends) and mental health professionals respectively.

# A FEW HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2021

**IMPROVEMENT  
DETECTED IN  
75% OF CALLS**

**CHANGES IN DISTRESS OF CALLER BETWEEN  
THE BEGINNING AND THE END OF THE CALL**





# BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF NEW hope makers

**In 2021, we continued to build the capacity of new volunteers to run Lebanon's National Lifeline.**

The Lifeline training is an organizational team effort and a valuable learning experience over four days, three times a year, that equips incoming volunteer operators from various backgrounds with knowledge, and tools to demystify suicide, provide emotional support and mental health first-aid to callers, implement active listening skills, intervene in suicidal crises, and practice self-care and peer support through role-play, operators testaments, various types of calls, and team-building exercises. The lengthy and thorough training builds expertise and bonds among a community of volunteers who are passionate about saving lives and raising awareness about mental health.

# LIFELINE TRAININGS DEMOGRAPHICS 2021

## Number of trained Lifeline operators

In 2021, the National Lifeline  
trained a total of

# 106 individuals

who were enrolled throughout  
the year across the 3 Lifeline  
trainings.



**A total of 91 volunteers were accepted followed the training and joined the Lifeline as operators.**

Month	Number of volunteers who completed the training	Number of volunteers who joined the Lifeline as operators
March 2021	38	31
July 2021	31	26
October 2021	37	34

# SAVING LIVES IN THE DARK

## SUMMER 2021

This is how our last hybrid meeting of the day looked like, zoom over hotspot from our dying phones, a dying laptop, and balcony lights from our neighbor's private generator.

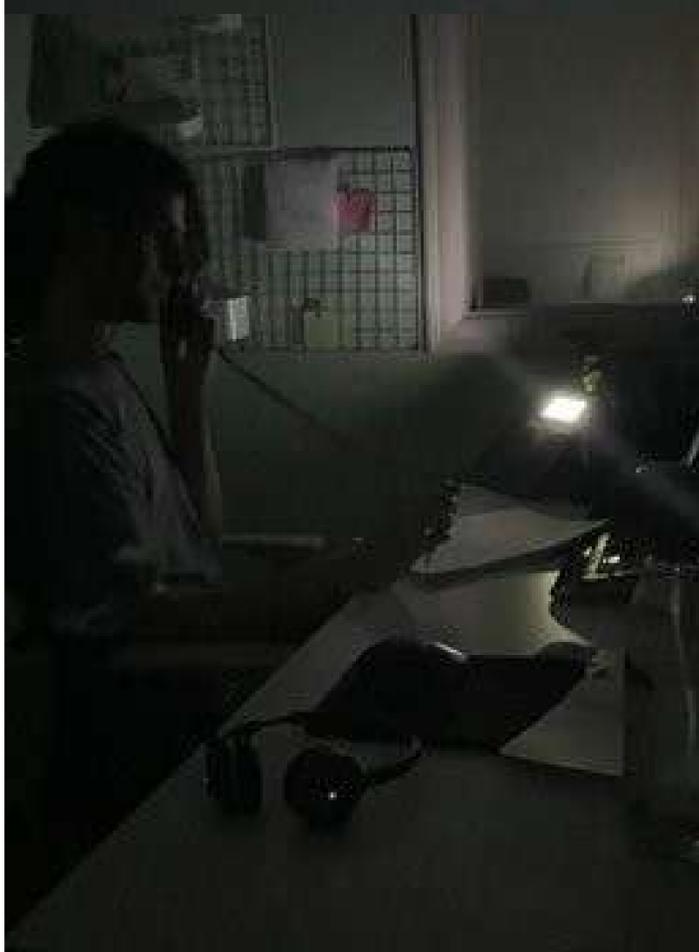
Despite everything, we have a team of young volunteers who keep pushing forward, whose passion for our mission is relentless and dedication to be there for our community is inspiring. Because of these young front liners, there is always faith that Lebanon will rise again, and we will build a better nation for the generations to come.

**Mia Atwi, President & Managing Director**



الحكي يبطول العمر  
Talking saves lives

1564



**A PRIVATE  
GENERATOR TO  
BRING BACK THE  
LIGHT SUPPORTED  
BY OUR DONORS  
GIZ, AFD and  
UNICEF.**



# hope **makers**

## **TELL THEIR STORIES**

### **SARAH**

Volunteering at Embrace has given me the opportunity to discover a person inside of me I never knew existed. The first call I received completely and utterly changed my perspective on how crucial our role is and on the immensity of the impact we have on people's lives. I had an impact. Embrace always welcomes me with open arms, a listening ear, and an unconditional love that immediately raised in me a sense of belonging that I cannot find anywhere else. It is not only about the calls; rather it is about the collective effort we invest in the goal of reducing mental health stigma in our society. It is also about the numerous opportunities to vent and share with our friends and colleagues our deepest thoughts and feelings without the fear of judgment or labeling. It is about the cause that always makes us committed to Embrace. The more I learned about mental health and suicide prevention, the more I was able to have a strong ripple effect among my friends and community, and the bigger the change. My experience at Embrace helped me visualize that change starts within you and from you. It taught me how to love and accept myself. It reinforced the idea that I matter, not my actions, not my illnesses, but I "as an individual" matter. You can never leave Embrace because you will carry it in your heart forever. It becomes an intertwined and unforgettable part of you and for that, I am eternally grateful for Embrace and to each of its members.

### **SAMAR**

If I had to use one word to describe my journey at Embrace, I would say 'Hope'. Embrace, the people at Embrace are all hope makers and not only for the callers. They gave me back hope in people and in my country and that means the world to me, it saved me. Being able to do the same with callers means the world to me. Giving people back hope is knowing that there is someone out there, a complete stranger, that is there to listen and support, knowing that what they're expressing, and their emotions are valid and important. I keep on growing and learning new things from the people at Embrace and the callers and I only hope I am doing the same.

With love and appreciation,

### **ANONYMOUS**

It is not a matter of what I left behind, but rather what I took with me. When I think of the skills and self-development I have learned during my time at Embrace, I have no doubts that Embrace played a big role in my life. The walls, this home, this beautiful cause, all allowed me first and foremost to be myself - in a society that showed me otherwise.

Often, I would be thanked for listening, and truthfully, I would want to thank our callers back. I learned so much from these different souls, and noticed something that is common between us all which is the desire to feel safe, to belong, to be loved, and to be authentic. These innate rights are what bridge any gaps between people; they are elements that ensure our human-ness. This said, I wish to remind you, dear reader, that you are worthy of all the greatest life has to offer.

I could go on and on about what Embrace has taught me, but when one asks about the things you learned in a space that embraced your authenticity, the question then encompasses solely a fraction of a much bigger picture, a picture that could merely be put into words.

I Love you, my dear Embrace.

# AN UNTOLD STORY

On a Thursday afternoon, when the world outside was too busy and loud, the phone rang and I heard nothing but silence, a silence so loud that it overpowers the noise of the world outside.

"Hi, I don't know why I called. I'm frustrated, my legs feel numb, my breath is heavy. I don't know what's wrong with me, but calling you is the first thing that came to my mind when I started panicking. I can't tell anyone I know, in our society, men are shamed if they cry or show feelings, I don't know what to do."

This was the longest call I have ever had, and it was the only time he ever shared that much with anyone in his 23 years.

This call had such a strong impact on my whole life, I was able to feel his raw emotions, the fact that he's lost, and his numbness, all from his tone of voice, stayed with me. He had no trust and found no meaning in the world around him, but for some reason, he trusted us with his words, his feelings, and his life. What amazed me is the fact that he was telling me about his inability to express himself to anyone he knows, yet he had the courage to share his most vulnerable state with us, even if it was with a shaky voice. Towards the end of the call, he said that he knows his problems may not be solved at this very moment, but he shared that: " No one took time to listen me like you did, you earned my trust." and he agreed to share his name.

This caller reassured me that sometimes, all we really need in order to hold the weight of our tough times, is a good ear that listens and understands without judging. And for this, I carry my mission with the lifeline so proudly.

R.



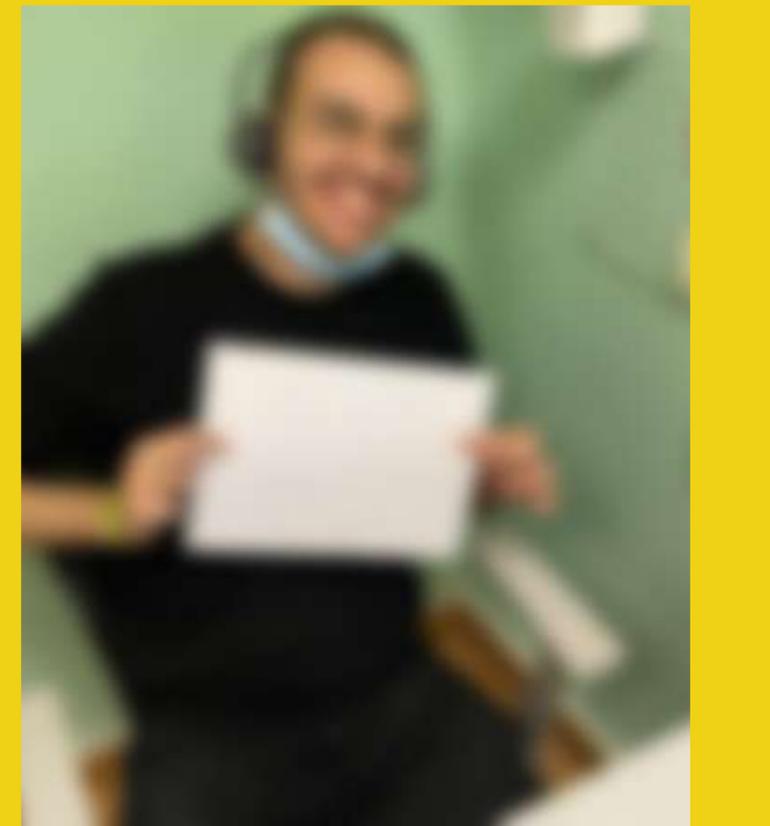
# MORE THAN A COMMUNITY, A FAMILY!



SHARING IMPACTFUL STORIES DURING THE "BREAKING SILENCE ON SUICIDE" CONFERENCE

CELEBRATING OUR VOLUNTEERS

**EACH  
OTHER'S  
SUPPORT  
SYSTEM  
WHEN  
ON-DUTY**



# LEARNINGS AND FUTURE PLANS



**THE LIFELINE**

National Emotional Support and Suicide Prevention Hotline

It was an extremely challenging year on all fronts, not only situationally but also operationally and internally. Our teams were struggling with worry, anxiety and fear from the turbulent present. We were hindered more than we expected from operating, and our performance levels were also at stake.

We learned the criticality of taking care of our own selves before caring for others.

Amidst all this turmoil we also learned the importance of standing together, in sickness and health. We were grateful and overwhelmed by the support and dedication of our staff and volunteers and the commitment they have to the cause, all while they had to go through transportation difficulties, COVID-19, financial and academic stressors, while taking calls and conducting meetings in the dark.

We also learned that we cannot halt our mission for an hour, a few minutes, or even a few seconds, as our people are struggling every second, and we will do whatever needs to be done, so we can operate 24/7 as soon as possible.

For the thousands of callers we listen to per year, thank you for trusting us. We promise you to do everything to be here for you, 24/7. And for the family of 120 operators, you are the reason we still believe in this mission and wake up every morning.

**ONE OF THE BIGGEST MILESTONES IN PROGRESS  
FOR MARCH 2022 IS THE 24/7 OPERATION OF THE LIFELINE 1564**



# THE PILOT OF THE NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCY RESPONSE MECHANISM

In 2021, the National Mental Health Program and Embrace collaborated to launch another milestone mental health project in Lebanon: the piloting of a national mental health emergency response mechanism (NMHERM). The NMHERM was designed and implemented as a pilot project in 2021 with the support of Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and is the first of its kind Mental Health Emergency Response Mechanism in the Middle East. It aims to ensure access to timely quality care for persons experiencing a mental health emergency while respecting human rights in compliance with applicable laws and best practices.

The project, in line with the national mental health strategy, aimed to address the absence of an appropriate mental health emergency response mechanism in order to attend to persons in a mental health emergency who need immediate support in a timely and effective manner. This included a gap in the availability of national mobile teams that can be dispatched to respond to a mental health emergency and a gap at the level of availability of a transportation system of persons in a mental health emergency in need of hospitalization.



Lebanese Republic  
Ministry of Public Health  
National Mental Health Programme

# WHAT DOES THE NMHERM CONSIST OF?

Trained teams that can be dispatched to the location of a person going through a mental health emergency (i.e., suicide attempt ongoing, acute psychosis...) to support them on-site.

Each mobile mental health team unit is formed of a Psychiatrist or a General Physician trained on Mental Health Emergencies and a registered nurse.

The teams attend to a person in a mental health emergency at their location through:

- Crisis de-escalation and management
- Accompanying person to the hospital during transportation in LRC ambulance in case hospitalization is required

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- The mechanism was set up with all needed operating procedures developed
- Mobile teams were formed and their capacity was built
- The mechanism was piloted and evaluated

Despite all the contextual challenges, the pilot phase was initiated in July 2021 and ran till December 2021 covering Beirut area. The Mobile Crisis Teams were available 24/7 to respond to Mental Health Emergencies.

During these four and a half months, the teams:



Responded to a total of 24 emergencies - day and night - within Beirut.



Reached the field within 30 minutes, despite the fuel crisis and traffic. During this time the lifeline operators remained on the phone with the caller.



Actively de-escalated the crisis, managed the case, and further accompanied 9 individuals out of the 24 to the hospital via Lebanese Red Cross ambulance, as the cases required hospitalization.

The pilot evaluation results pointed to the effectiveness and feasibility of this mechanism.

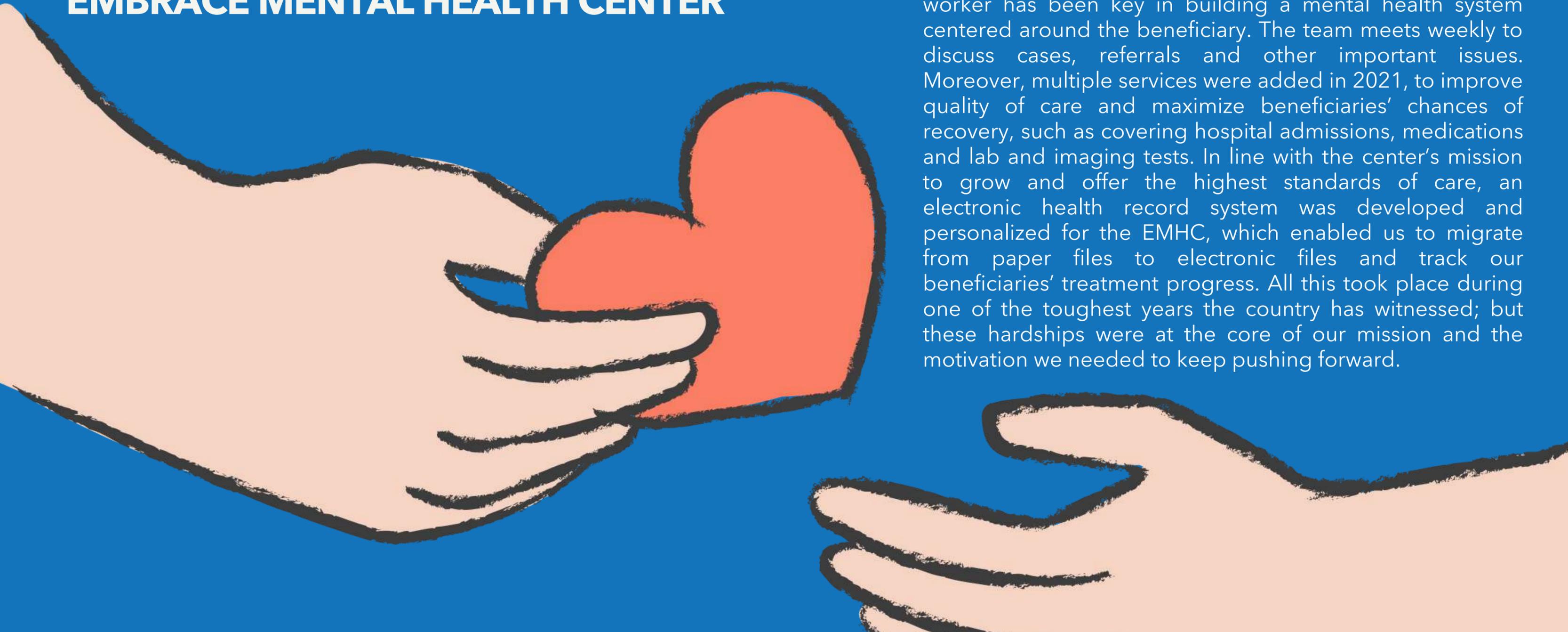
In 2022, the National Mental Health Program and Embrace will build on the results of the pilot to set-up a plan for potential scale-up of the mechanism, while making the adjustments necessary to the model based on the pilot evaluation, to make professional assistance available for individuals experiencing mental health emergencies, so that no person is left uncared for.



# EMHC

**EMBRACE MENTAL HEALTH CENTER**

The Embrace Mental Health Center, established in October 2020, witnessed an exponential growth in 2021. It was the year of building structures and laying the foundations of a successful model of a community mental health center in the country. Our growing team of psychiatrists, psychotherapists and psychology interns supported by an administrative team: clinical assistant, a psychiatric nurse and a social worker has been key in building a mental health system centered around the beneficiary. The team meets weekly to discuss cases, referrals and other important issues. Moreover, multiple services were added in 2021, to improve quality of care and maximize beneficiaries' chances of recovery, such as covering hospital admissions, medications and lab and imaging tests. In line with the center's mission to grow and offer the highest standards of care, an electronic health record system was developed and personalized for the EMHC, which enabled us to migrate from paper files to electronic files and track our beneficiaries' treatment progress. All this took place during one of the toughest years the country has witnessed; but these hardships were at the core of our mission and the motivation we needed to keep pushing forward.



# OUR TEAM



# TESTIMONIES FROM OUR TEAM



**DR YARA CHAMOUN - PSYCHIATRIST  
AND HEAD OF CLINICAL STAFFING**

"I have been working at the Embrace Mental Health Center as a psychiatrist since the launch of the clinic. Most of the beneficiaries we saw in the first few months were individuals suffering from the traumatic events of the capital's explosion. With time, and with the worsening situation, demands skyrocketed and we started seeing, among others, relapses of depressive and anxiety disorders, and new-onset mental health conditions; that is, people who have never had psychiatric or psychological problems before they started to seeking help at our clinics.

Being able to help people in this difficult time is the motivation that keeps us going. Giving back to our suffering community gives a sense of purpose, and I personally cannot be more grateful to make an impact. Two of our main challenges were a shortage of professionals which meant that so many people remain on the waiting lists, and a shortage of medications. Despite everything, we remain hopeful that the situation will get better one day, and that we will get out of this "war" less wounded."



**DR. MYRIAM ZARZOUR - PSYCHIATRIST  
AND HEAD OF CLINICAL EXCELLENCE**

"Directly following the horrific Beirut blast, I decided to dedicate my time to embark on a journey and volunteer with Embrace. To state the intensity of the challenges faced initially is an understatement. My colleagues and I were dealing with the impact of the trauma ourselves while trying to help the victims of the blast heal and overcome their struggles. Indirectly, the assistance we provided, and the support of the entire team was the healing factor I was yearning for. Witnessing my patients improve over the following months has brought a great sense of comfort and kept our hopes up for a brighter tomorrow.

With EMHC, I was integrated into the team as a consultant psychiatrist, where I learned and grew daily. The close collaboration and tightly knit team has allowed me to focus all my energy on my patients and the improvement of the community. EMHC provided a safe inviting environment to work in, and I am grateful to have worked alongside many healthcare workers with similar goals and ethical standards over the past year."

# TESTIMONIES FROM OUR TEAM



## **NIRMEEN SAASSOUH - MENTAL HEALTH SOCIAL WORKER**

Although textbooks are an excellent source for theories for therapy treatment plans, there can be no replacement for a practical learning experience, one that is present at Embrace. Joining the Embrace Mental Health Center has been the most enriching experience so far. We are not only surrounded by skillful supervisors but also, we interact with a multidisciplinary team of the most knowledgeable individuals in the field of mental health. As a psychologist-in-training, the professional support we receive from every staff member at Embrace is beyond what one can imagine. The opportunity to engage in diverse learning activities had completed the cycle of efficient and effective learning. It is from this place that good psychologists will arise and being part of it is a blessing that I am always thankful for. During my training, I have witnessed Embrace's positive impact on the lives of its beneficiaries. I can vividly recall one patient saying "امبرائيس هي الدعم المطلق بظل كل شي صعب عم امرق في. عنجد بتردو الروح". It is messages like these that push us forward toward our mission; Mental health for all



## **JOELLE JABER - ADULT CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST AND PSYCHOTHERAPIST**

"Therapy was like the breath of life, a hug, a space where I felt safe to be visible, where I didn't mind the light anymore", an expression once said by a patient among several others whom I have seen at EMHC. Although my journey at EMHC only started few months back, it was indeed a rich experience and continues to be. Our dedication to help people and the urge we feel to be there for them sometimes overrides our ability to notice the minute shifts that happen in their life as a response to the therapy process. Therapy is a journey of growth, a safe space where people feel secure enough to drop down defences that have been protecting them their whole life. This is the trust they have towards us and the trust we hold on to close to our hearts. Lebanon has been undergoing collective traumatic experiences for the past two years. A main challenge that was encountered during these times was the lack of control that we and the patients, had on the external events that were taking place and the constant deterioration of the surrounding. Despite the latter and other challenges, we managed to plant hope and help people reach the shore. Embrace's values are its life compass, no matter the obstacles; it always finds ways to break through the light

# TESTIMONIES FROM OUR TEAM



**ELSA JARAWAN**  
**- MENTAL HEALTH NURSE**

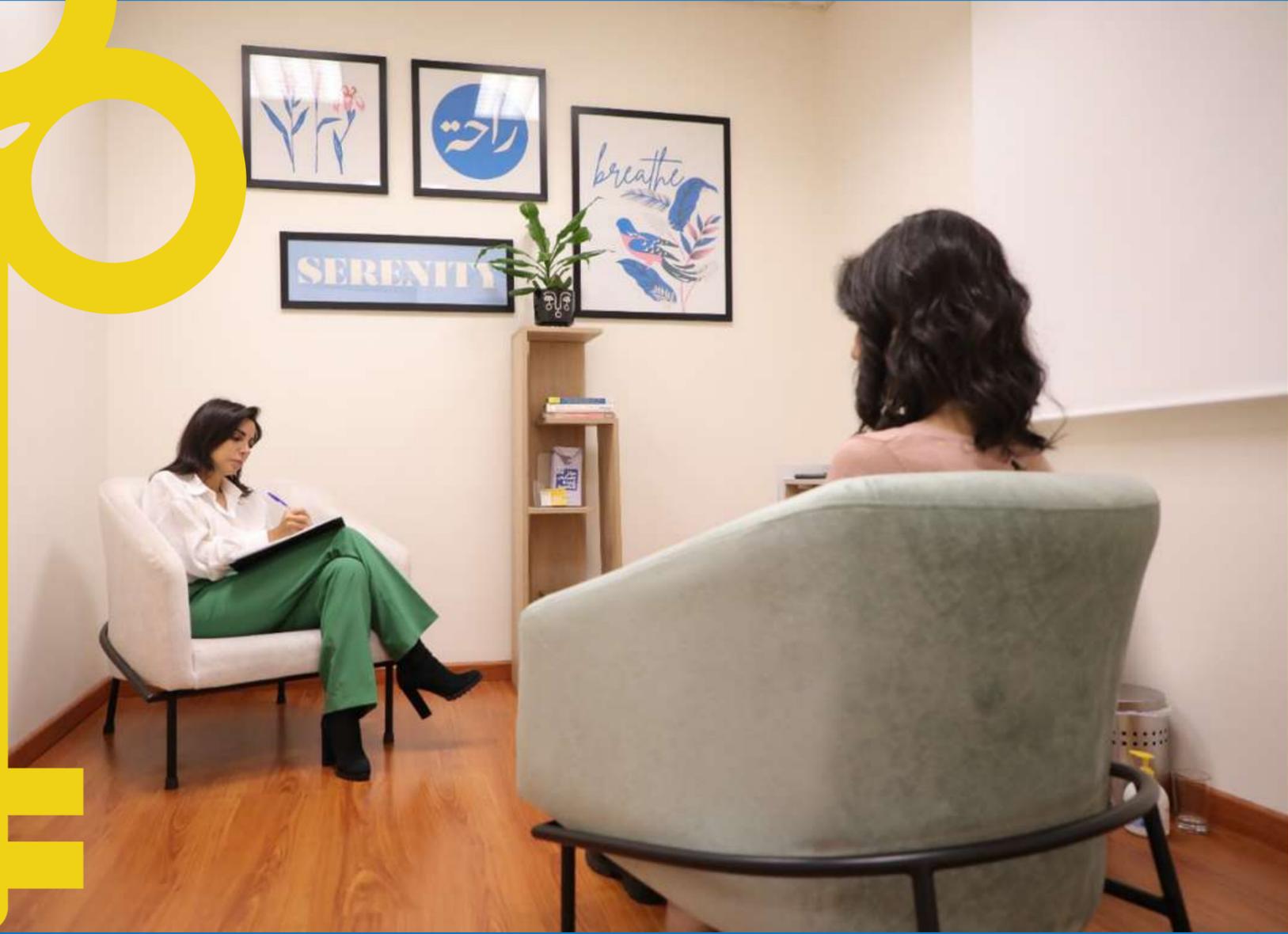
Working with Embrace has been one of the biggest achievements I have made. I joined the organization as a mental health nurse and I was glad that I met a new team of highly skilled professionals who have one shared goal "Helping Patients". It is always a challenge to accommodate a high number of beneficiaries and respond to their needs yet it is very rewarding. Being part of the team and working collaboratively with each member helped us in providing the best quality of care to patients. During the most difficult times in the country, when patients were not being able to find their medications and when they could not afford the hospital bills, we were providing light, support, guidance and follow up.



**LARA JALLOUL- CLINICAL CHILD  
PSYCHOLOGIST**

My journey with Embrace began 7 months ago, and it has provided me with so much growth and warmth; a warmth so transmittable that one of my patients once said: "my goal in life is to find the warmth that I found at Embrace". Another patient's words were: "Not all heroes wear capes. Some of them casually reside in one of Hamra's beautiful streets, in a very simple building just like a beehive, the place is filled with momentum and the atmosphere feels pretty much like home." The best part of Embrace is that we do our work collaboratively. When a patient needs support that goes beyond psychotherapy, psychiatry or lifeline services, our holistic interdisciplinary approach assists patients multisided; in terms of finding vocational training, shelter or safety (a big thank you to our social worker). It is so gratifying to work in this field and specifically with Embrace; a Gem in the middle of Beirut that helps people feel less alone.

# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



Around

# 6000

free mental health sessions were provided through the EMHC. Mental health sessions included individual and group sessions with psychologists, psychiatrists, psychologists in training, social workers, and nurses.

The EMHC coordinated with local pharmacies to cover the cost of medication for around

# 200

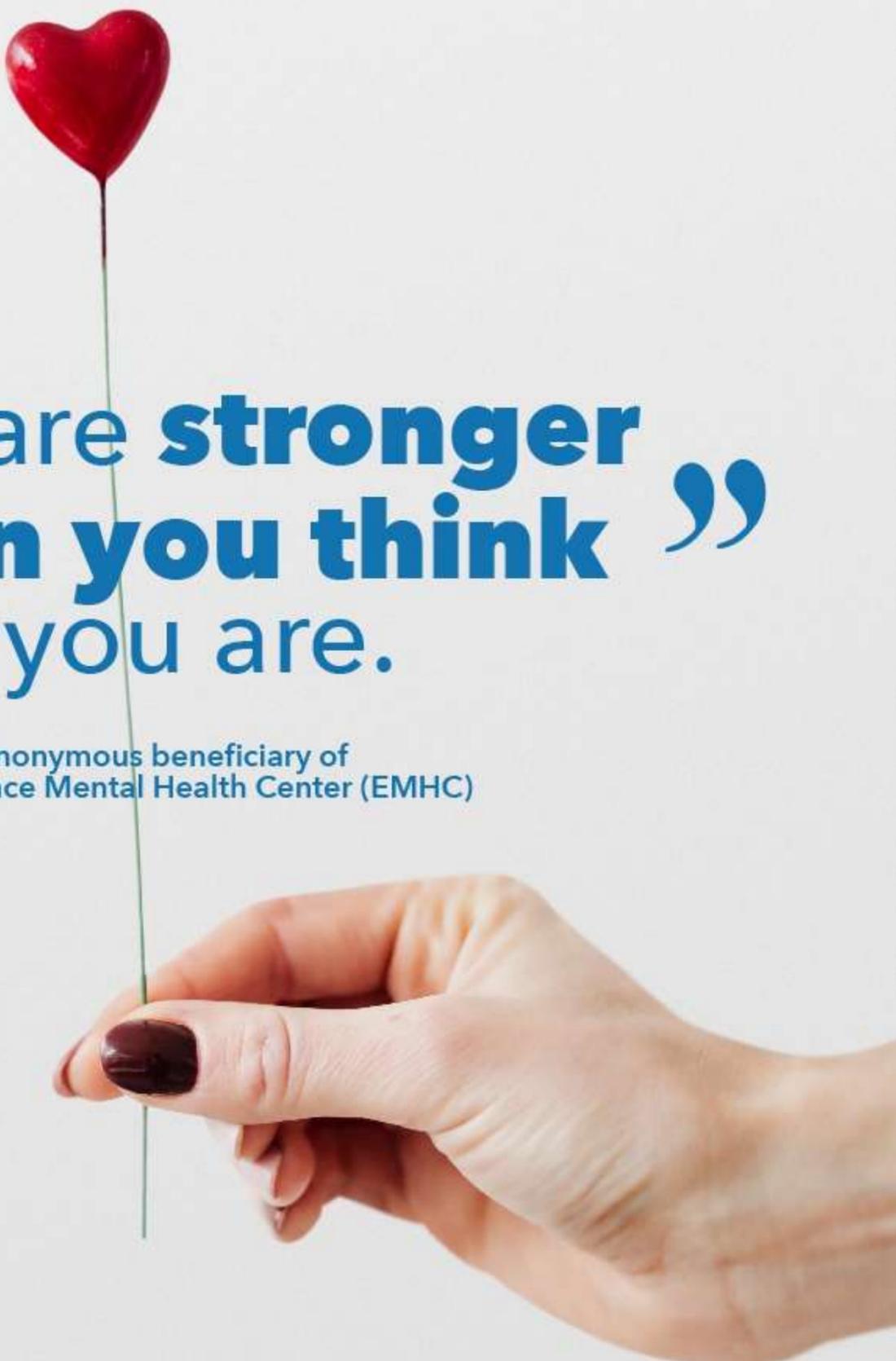
beneficiaries.

# 700

beneficiaries received free mental health sessions at the Embrace Mental Health Center.

OUR  
BENEFICIARIES  
TALKED

*Their hearts out*

A hand with dark nail polish holds a thin string that supports a small, shiny red heart-shaped balloon. The background is a plain, light color.

“ You are **stronger**  
**than you think** ”  
you are.

Anonymous beneficiary of  
the Embrace Mental Health Center (EMHC)



Thank you for being there when I needed you

Thank you for being there to push me when  
I didn't want to keep going

Thank you for being there to support me and  
hold my hand through everything I was afraid of

Thank you for never judging me or using my weakness against me

Thank you for not using me and for  
always treating me with the utmost care and respect

Thank you for never letting me down

Thank you for showing me a world of beauty and being  
with me as I began to love it as well

Thank you for showing me my new world  
of confidence and self-love

Thank you for seeing the potential that I have and always encouraging me

I will never forget this beautiful journey with you

Thank you Embrace and the big thanks goes back to Ms. Joelle.  
Therapy is one of the best things I've ever done in my life  
and those were the best 5 months ever



Testimonial from a beneficiary of  
the Embrace Mental Health Center EMHC



I wanted to share my story regarding my experience with embrace. I was passing through such a tough times mentally and it started affecting me physically. Always sad low mood, tremors, trouble sleeping, loss of appetite I always felt I have depression and anxiety but never really had the courage and guts to seek help until I took the decision to book an appointment at embrace. It was a hard thing to do but believe me once u do it you're going to feel so much better. With an amazing staff and professionals. Just want to tell anyone who's suffering that it gets better, and do that step and seek help and make yourself better and always remember that there's always light at the end of the tunnel no matter how hard it gets or going there's always hope and you matter!!

**You are stronger than you think you are.**



embrace

# EMHC'S CLINICAL TRAINING PROGRAM - YEAR 1

When 9 students graduated in July 2021 as the first cohort of the Embrace Clinical Training program, there was a collective sense of achievement, purpose and ambition. Our interns had engaged relentlessly in vigorous daily training that shaped their clinical competencies and also their character and professional persona. It was not easy at first - the interns were understandably anxious to embark on a full year of training. The program was newly launched, right after August 2020. While we were confident in our capabilities and experience in clinical psychology, healthcare management, and higher-education learning, and while we had a strong multidisciplinary team, we did not know how the year would unfold in Lebanon. But like many of us in the country, we set doubts aside and worked hard with the resources we had.

Seasoned professionals from universities and community practices gave their time and expertise to supervise and coach the students in weekly one-to-one sessions, while experts from around the globe shared knowledge through courses on diagnostic and treatment intervention. With these formal supports, and an informal net of peer support, strong leadership directive, and a positive working environment, the interns confidently conducted more than 1600 sessions at the EMHC, and observed hundreds more. They visibly grew their APA-defined clinical competencies, they became more confident and aware of their professional identity, and they developed strong professional bonds amongst themselves and the Embrace team. The universities were proud of their students, and spoke highly of the practicum program offered to them. Embrace's clinic was proud to host these tremendous students and watch them climb their learning curve.

Next year's challenges continue to be many- notably the unpredictability of Lebanon, fighting against the brain drain of students and senior clinical staff and supervisors, maintaining a high caliber of student selection, and continuing to serve patients with the same level of skill and professionalism. As long as we remain driven by the core Embrace vision and values, we can work together to overcome these challenges and emerge again with a sense of achievement, purpose and ambition



**DR. PIA ZEINOUN**  
**DIRECTOR OF CLINICAL TRAINING**  
**PROGRAM AT EMHC**



# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- ✓ The program successfully graduated 9 students from Haigazian and AUB after 10 months of intense training.
- ✓ Students received more than 20 workshops from global experts on psychotherapeutic interventions, biological and psychosocial models, and diagnoses.
- ✓ 100% of interns rated their internship experience as a “positive and comfortable working environment” and “followed ethical and professional guidelines”.
- ✓ Trainees conducted more than 1600 direct psychotherapy sessions at the EMHC.



# TESTIMONIALS FROM OUR STUDENTS



My experience at the Embrace Clinical Training Program has been indeed a fruitful one. The hands-on experience I have acquired has been overwhelmingly beneficial. The clinic has a multidisciplinary team who we learn from with every single interaction. Having several mental health professionals from different backgrounds allows us to think in various ways and learn from different points of views. The individual supervisors are brilliant, sensible and experts at what they do. The training experience at Embrace exceeded my expectations...

**MULTIDISCIPLINARY  
TEAM**

**BRILLIANT, SENSIBLE  
EXPERTS**

**EXCEEDED MY  
EXPECTATIONS**

The EMHC was able to establish a multidisciplinary site that offered different types of trainings, tools, and observation settings that could sharpen our experience in the field mental health intervention. In addition, professionals who conduct our training and didactic sessions have a remarkable background in the research and academic field, and come from different schools and approaches --- Intern from Haigazian University



**OFFERED DIFFERENT  
TYPES OF TRAININGS,  
TOOLS, AND  
OBSERVATION  
SETTINGS**



As psychologists-in-training, the professional support we receive from every staff member at Embrace is beyond what one can imagine. The opportunity to engage in diverse learning activities has completed the cycle of efficient and effective learning. It is from this place that good psychologists will arise and being part of it is a blessing that I am always thankful for. --- Intern from American University of Beirut

**BEYOND WHAT ONE  
CAN IMAGINE**

**HAS COMPLETED THE  
CYCLE OF EFFICIENT  
AND EFFECTIVE  
LEARNING.**

# INSURMOUNTABLE. SET THE BAR VERY HIGH

The experience in the Embrace CMHC so far has been insurmountable. I believe that we are being exposed to the best of the best in terms of professionals in the field. I appreciate the approachability of the staff, and wish to have more sessions in terms of workshops, one on one sessions with the team in addition to our supervisions. The learning experience has set the bar very high, and I can confidently say that I am applying what I am learning in my master's degree and what I learnt in my BA. --- Intern from Hagazian University



# AWARENESS AND OUTREACH

"Joining Embrace's team 8 months ago was a turning point in my life. My job is incredibly rewarding, and it makes me feel connected to something much bigger than myself. I believe that mental health is a fundamental right for every human being without distinction of age, gender, race, religion, political belief, wealth, or social status. Every person should have the opportunity to learn about their mental health and to have access to mental health services when needed. I have seen too many people suffering from mental health issues that could have been prevented or treated, and I always knew that I wanted to have a meaningful career in an organization that strives to support its community and to make the world a better place. By raising awareness about mental health, Embrace breaks the cycle of stigma and misinformation and provides support to those struggling with their mental health. I have always been inspired by Embrace's work, and today, I am contributing to its mission with immense pride, gratitude, and fondness. Being the youngest member of the team can be challenging but it offers me the opportunity to grow both on a professional and a personal level. I am grateful for having the chance to work with the most impressive team of dedicated, conscientious, and caring people who have trusted, respected, and supported me since my first day here."

**CANDINE AOUN**  
**AWARENESS & OUTREACH COORDINATOR**



# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

In 2021, we were able to reach

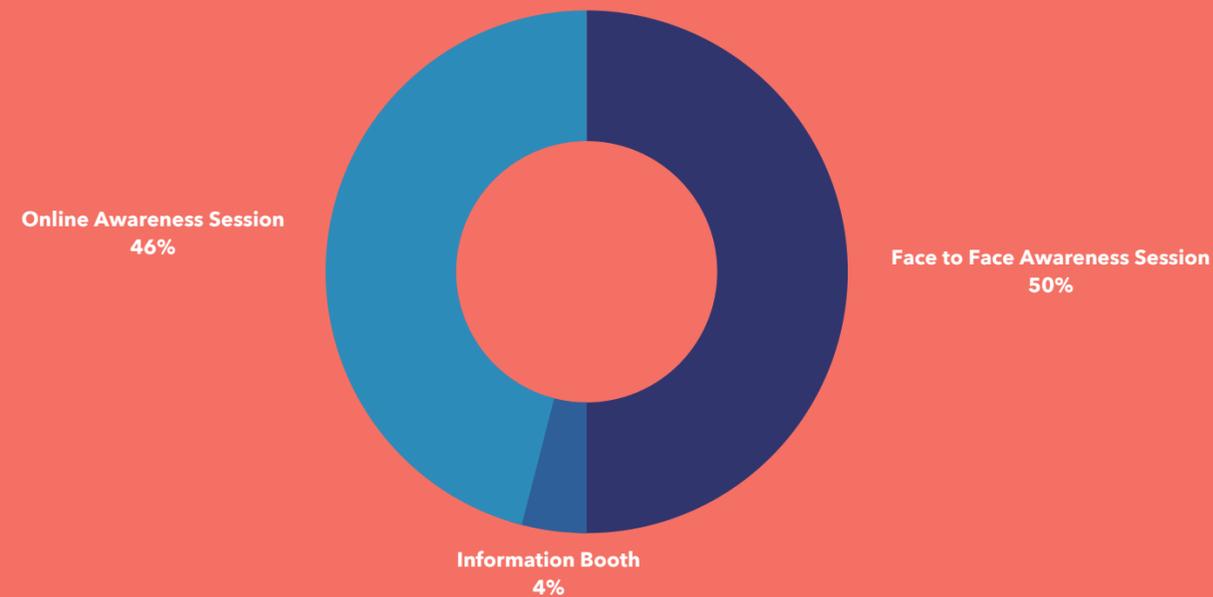
**2,898 people through  
70 mental health  
awareness interventions**

(compared to 31 interventions in 2020 and 33 interventions in 2020). We made sure to respond to all the requests we received and to always deliver appropriate, useful, and interesting information.



# TYPES OF SESSIONS

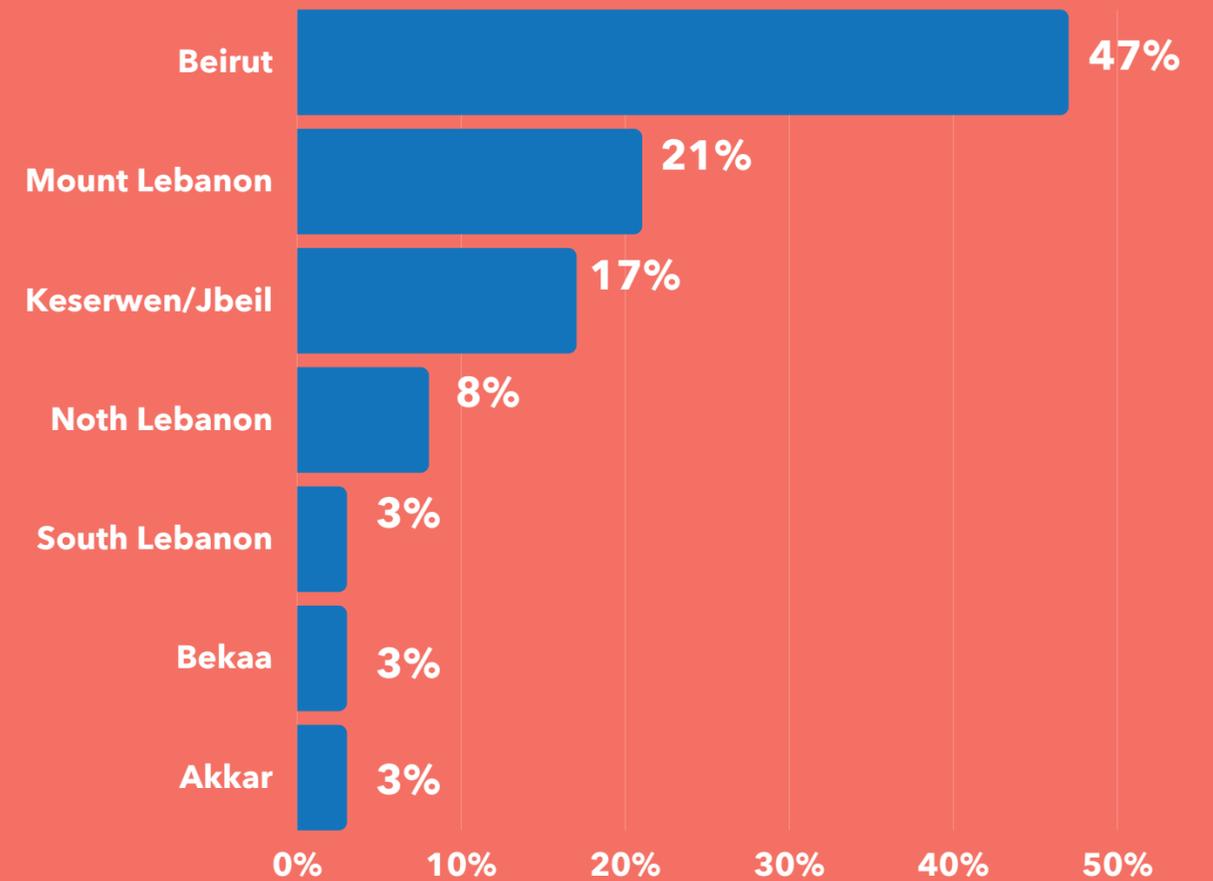
During the first half of the year, the majority of sessions were held online due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Starting June, we were able to hold most of our activities face-to-face. The team showed great flexibility by adapting the activities for the two modalities and we were happy to see that all of our sessions had a great impact on the participants.



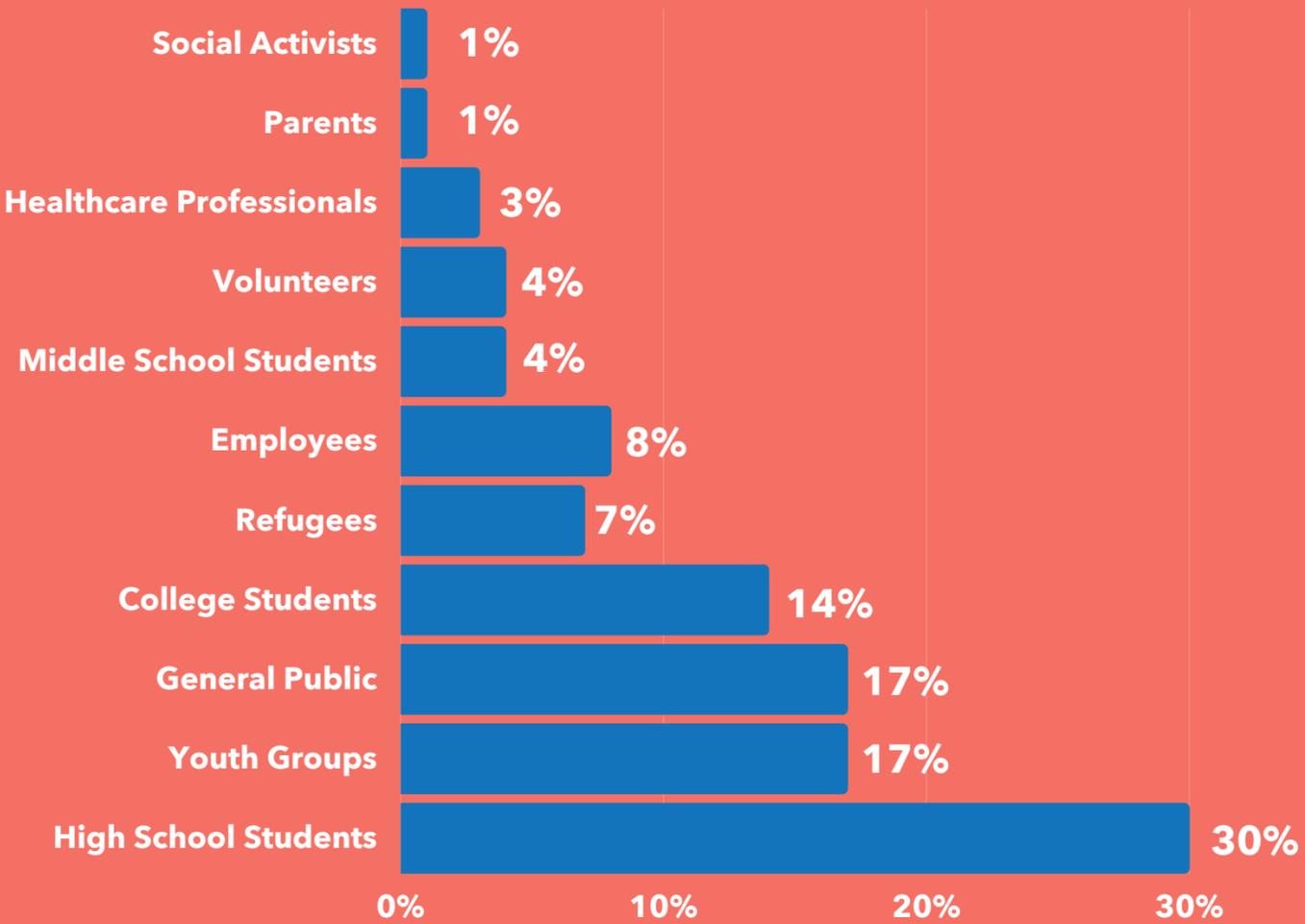
**Number of physical workshops 38**  
**Number of virtual workshops 32**

# REGIONS

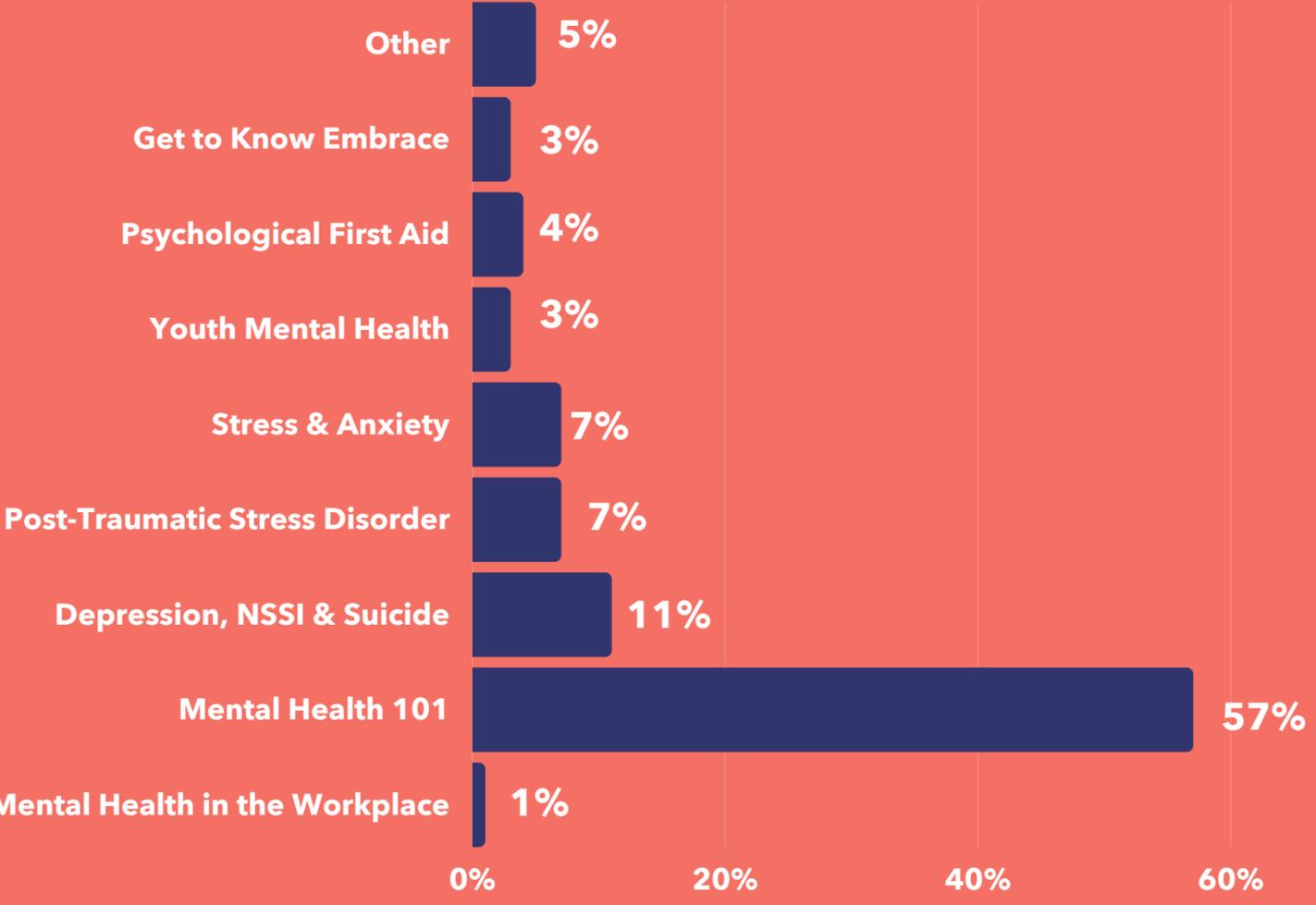
Due to the unstable situation and transportation challenges, our interventions took place mostly in Beirut and Mount Lebanon and one of our main goals for 2022 is to expand into areas across the whole country targeting Akkar, Tripoli, and South of Lebanon.



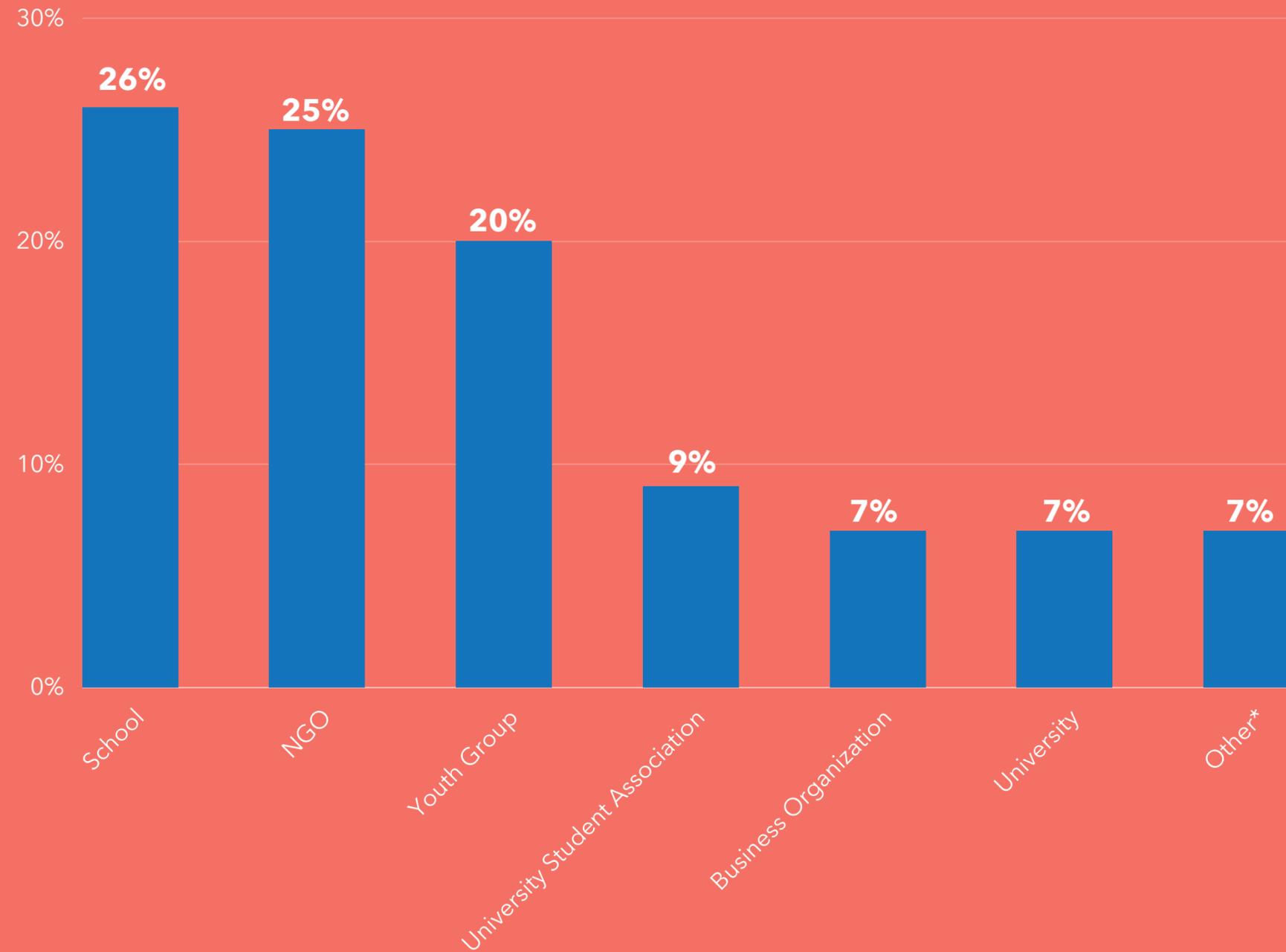
# TYPES OF AUDIENCE



# TOPICS COVERED



# TYPES OF COLLABORATORS



After months of school closures and social isolation, we received a large number of requests from school principals and teachers that reported increasing signs of stress and trauma among their students, especially in secondary classes. Embrace is responding to this crisis by increasing awareness about mental health and suicide prevention in schools. With the lack of a national strategy to support students and their education, Embrace will continue to help and support students and teachers to reduce mental health barriers to learning.

## WE GOT SOME FEEDBACK!

---

Among 289 responders with available data, the overwhelming majority of beneficiaries

**85% reported that they would recommend the session to a friend.**



# ECHOES FROM THE AUDIENCES



“The session created a safe space for all people who participated and helped make them feel validated and understood.”

---

“The session was very engaging, and the facilitator took the time to answer our questions during the presentation. She is compassionate and real which made the session relatable.”

---

“I know many people who have depression and anxiety, and this session taught me a lot on how to help them.”

---

“I absolutely loved the session. The facilitator really created a supportive and inclusive environment and gave the session in a way that kept everyone engaged and interested.”



# CEDARS & RESEARCH HUB

## CAPTURING AND EXPANDING DATA ANALYTICS AND RESEARCH ON SUICIDE

Established in 2020, the Research Department at Embrace coordinates closely with other departments as well as external collaborators to realize two core functions. First, the department works to ensure that data across all Embrace services are collected and stored in an efficient manner. Data is then analyzed to monitor project goals and objectives as well as enable data-driven decision and policy making. Second, department members are dedicated and continuously strive to contribute to research on mental health needs in Lebanon.

In line with our main departmental responsibilities, in 2021 the department was heavily involved in enabling the integration of the new call handling and client relationship management (CRM) systems at the Lifeline as well as the Electronic Health Record (EHR) system at the clinic. These systems have not only enabled more efficient and reliable data collection across programs but also the capture of data for novel metrics of interest. Since their implementation, the department has been continuously working to ensure that data from various sources are managed, stored, and leveraged appropriately.

Moreover, in 2021, the research department also reaped the fruits of several years of dedicated research and investigation. Our team of internal and external collaborators published results from 2 studies. In the first study, we took a closer look at patterns and characteristics of suicide in Lebanon. This was the first nationwide report of cases spanning from 2008 to 2018. In the second study we explored caller characteristics and evaluated the short-term effectiveness of the Lifeline services in reducing distress and suicidal behaviors.

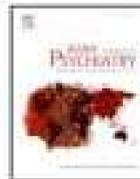
**IN 2022, WE HOPE TO FURTHER  
CONTRIBUTE TO KNOWLEDGE  
AND INSIGHT ON MENTAL  
HEALTH IN THE COMMUNITY  
THROUGH OUR VARIOUS  
RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AND  
COLLABORATIONS.**



# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Working closely with the Lifeline, Clinic, and Business Support departments, as well as our external Data Consult team, to tailor the development of systems that can enable improved data capture, monitoring, and storage.
2. Tapping into and analyzing previously unleveraged data to enable improved, data-driven decision making.
3. Publishing 2 articles in peer-reviewed journals and organizing the National Conference "Breaking Silence on suicide: A 360 conference on Prevalence, Practice, Prevention and Views forward in Lebanon





## A closer look at patterns and characteristics of suicide in Lebanon: A first nationwide report of cases from 2008 to 2018

Maya Bizri<sup>a,\*</sup>, Lea Zelnoun<sup>b</sup>, Alexandra M. Mihailescu<sup>c</sup>, Michel Daher<sup>a, b</sup>, Mia Atoui<sup>b, d, e, f</sup>, Rabih Chammay<sup>a, g</sup>, Ziad Nahas<sup>b, h, i</sup>

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<sup>c</sup> Department of Psychological and Behavioral Sciences, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, United Kingdom

<sup>d</sup> Department of Psychology, American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon

<sup>e</sup> National Mental Health Program, Ministry of Public Health, Beirut, Lebanon

<sup>f</sup> Psychiatry Department, Faculty of Medicine, Saint Joseph University, Beirut, Lebanon

<sup>g</sup> Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, United States

### ARTICLE INFO

**Keywords:**  
Epidemiology  
Suicide  
Mortality  
Lebanon  
Middle East  
Public health

### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Suicide is a leading preventable cause of mortality worldwide. Suicide rates in Lebanon are unknown, as reported numbers are extrapolated and modeled over neighboring countries with poor quality of vital registration data.

**Methods:** Numbers of death by suicide were obtained from the Internal Security Forces records from January 2008 through December 2018. Records from 2011 through 2018 specified the gender of the individual, the means of the suicide, the date and place of suicide. As of March 2014, nationality of the individual was recorded.

**Results:** The total recorded number of completed suicides over 11 years is 1366 with an annual rate ranging between 1.87 and 2.4 per 100,000 capita. The male to female ratio was 2:1. Death by firearms (41.4 %) was the most common means used, followed by hanging (26.5 %), jumping from a height (13.6 %), and poisoning (13.5 %). Males were more likely to use firearms while females were more likely to use hanging or jumping from a height ( $p < 0.001$ ), the latter being a common finding in non-Lebanese nationals (Ethiopian). Suicides were most common in Mount Lebanon and least common in Nabatieh governorates, while their distribution across seasons was similar.

**Conclusion:** In Lebanon, like most of the Middle Eastern countries, suicide is a social and religious taboo. Our study shows a stable prevalence of suicide rates, particularly after national efforts to improve awareness and reporting. Suicide means and vulnerable populations should be at the heart of targeted prevention strategies.

### 1. Introduction

Suicide has recently emerged as a leading preventable cause of mortality worldwide. (World Health Organization, 2014) Reduction in suicide mortality rates has also been identified as an indicator in the Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030. It is estimated that more than 800,000 people die from suicide yearly worldwide: approximately one death every 40 second. While per-capita-

rate seems to be higher in high-income countries, it is estimated that 80 % of all global suicides occur in low and middle-income countries. Mental illnesses remain the most common precursors of suicide. (World Health Organization, 2014)

The Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) represents 8% of the global population and the WHO estimates that it only accounted for 3.9 % of global suicides in 2016. Such discrepancy is likely due to the poor quality of vital registration data in these countries. (World Health

# A CLOSER LOOK AT PATTERNS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF SUICIDE IN LEBANON: A FIRST NATIONWIDE REPORT OF CASES FROM 2008 TO 2018

Suicide is a leading preventable cause of mortality worldwide. Suicide rates in Lebanon are unknown, as reported numbers are extrapolated and modeled over neighboring countries with poor quality of vital registration data. This is the first study to report on the suicide prevalence rate in Lebanon, after collaboration between Embrace and the Lebanese Internal Security Forces (ISF). Numbers of death by suicide were obtained from the ISF records from January 2008 through December 2018. Records from 2011 through 2018 specified the gender of the individual, the means of suicide, the date and place of suicide. As of March 2014, the nationality of the individual was recorded. The study presents the prevalence rate of suicide in Lebanon, and discusses demographics of gender, nationality, and place of residence. It also discusses recommendations for policies to be placed for suicide means and for vulnerable populations who should be at the heart of targeted prevention strategies.

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<sup>†</sup> Co-senior investigators.

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# Evaluation of Lebanon's National Helpline for Emotional Support and Suicide Prevention: Reduction of Emotional Distress among Callers

Pia A. Zeinoun<sup>1</sup>, Farah E. Yehia<sup>2</sup>, Lila Z. Khoderiaran<sup>3</sup>, Sereen F. Yord<sup>4</sup>, Mia M. Aouf<sup>5</sup>, Rabih El Chammay<sup>6</sup> & Ziad H. Nahas<sup>7</sup>

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\*First and second author contributed equally to the manuscript

## Abstract

Helplines provide time-limited help and orientation to callers who are suicidal or experiencing self-reported emotional distress, but there is no evidence regarding the efficacy of helplines in low-to-middle income countries like Lebanon. The Lebanese Lifeline is Lebanon's national and only helpline for emotional support and suicide prevention, opening since 2018. We assessed anonymous data of 4657 calls received between February 2018 and February 2020. We analysed caller characteristics and predictors of distress and evaluated the immediate outcome of calls by examining the difference in caller distress from beginning to end of call, using a repeated-measures design. The helpline received calls from a majority Lebanese sample that was diverse in terms of age, location, education, employment status and sexual orientation. We found a significant and large ( $d = 1.94$  and  $1.99$ , respectively) decrease in subjective levels of distress among those calling for emotional distress only, and those with additional suicide-related behaviour. The most distressed callers were likely to be female, in a relationship (as opposed to not), and experiencing at least one risk factor, and while everyone showed improved distress, those with at least one risk factor showed the most decrease. The helpline is effective in reducing distress and suicidal ideation, across a wide sample of callers. Future studies need to investigate long-term outcomes and circumvent limitations related to data collection capture.

**Keywords:** Lebanon, phone-based intervention, suicide, suicide hotline

## Background

Mental health issues, with suicide as their morbid yet preventable consequence, are the global health concern. Reducing deaths by suicide is part of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal 3, with a target of reduced mortality from noncommunicable diseases, including a reduction in suicide rates. The World Health Organization also aimed at reducing global suicide mortalities by 10% in 2020 through the implementation of national suicide prevention strategies. While addressing the underlying social

and individual risk factors of suicide is the ideal mode of

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**Accepted:** 4 May 2021 **Published:** 9 September 2021

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## Key implications for practice

- Lebanon's national helpline for emotional support and suicide prevention logged 4657 calls in 2 years, from a majority Lebanese sample diverse in terms of age, location, education, employment status and sexual orientation.
- The helpline interventions are effective in significantly reducing subjective levels of distress and suicide-related behaviour among callers.
- The most distressed callers are likely to be female, in a relationship (as opposed to not), and reporting at least one life stressor (risk factor).
- Those with at least one stressor (risk factor) show the largest reduction in distress.

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[www.interventionjournal.org](http://www.interventionjournal.org)

DOI:  
10.1177/10634269211019720

# EVALUATION OF LEBANON'S NATIONAL HELPLINE FOR EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AND SUICIDE PREVENTION: REDUCTION OF EMOTIONAL DISTRESS AMONG CALLERS

# OUR PARTNERSHIPS



**LEA ZEINOUN -  
DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC  
PARTNERSHIPS**

The strategic partnerships department is invested in building long-term relationships with mental health advocating individuals and institutions that would support Embrace's mission and long-term strategy. The department exists to grow and manage external relationships of diverse natures that would and are supporting its impact, sustainability, and expansion. Throughout the years the department has successfully secured partnerships that have supported its projects and in certain relationships pushed the projects to become the well-established programs they are today. In the past year, the department has focused on strengthening existing partnerships, the projects and programs encompassed under these partnerships, the lengths of the partnerships and the diversity of partners. This year particularly, while mental health was gaining global recognition, the situation in Lebanon was worsening socially and economically which increased the risk factors our community faces and subsequently the probability of mental health problems.

The current economic and social situation is a powerful double hit to the mental health system and its national strategy. While the situation increases the need for mental health services because of the rise in risk factors, the situation decreases the capacity to offer these services because of social threats, brain drain, transportation restrictions and more. We are all battling daily challenges to lead a normal or stable life and sometimes just to survive and on a lot of those days, we can fail to overcome these challenges. Embrace's partnerships have given it the strength to stand by individuals to ensure they are given the resources and capacity to face their challenges successfully. Alongside its dedicated team, a large part of the success Embrace has is from its reputable partners. The relationships made over the years have collected an international group of humanitarians working in diverse fields, yet passionate about being mental health advocates. In the past year, Embrace's impact, transparency and communication have granted it the successful renewal of all partnerships made in 2020, as well as new ones, venturing into social work that complements and impacts mental wellbeing.

Moreover, this year the department was invited to a partner event with Agence Française de Développement (AFD), as part of the celebration of their 80th anniversary in Paris, France. The agency celebrated their partnerships by selecting 6 projects globally to show case, one of which was Embrace for the impact created with the National Lifeline and the Community Mental Health Center despite of the trauma and challenges the nation has been facing. The event took place on December 2nd 2021, where the Director of Strategic Partnerships Lea Zeinoun presented the work from the Lifeline focusing on the most common expressions of emotional distress and environmental risk factors, and the ways in which Embrace through its partnerships has expanded to respond to the increase in mental health needs.

In 2022, we hope to resonate the mission of Embrace and the impact of its programs in further geographical areas and reach more of the population in Lebanon and continue to build relationships that aspire to build better mental health in Lebanon.



# PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY OUR PARTNERS

	Embrace Mental Health Center	Lifeline	Awareness & Outreach	Research	Communications	Training program & Student Scholarship
	X	X			X	
	X	X				
	X			X		
	X	X			X	
	X					
	X	X	X	X	X	
	X	X	X	X		X
	X	X			X	
	X			X	X	
<b>PRIVATE DONORS</b>	X	X				X

A huge thank you to all our donors who also trusted us, our work and our mission.



# COMMUNICATIONS IN 2021

# LITTLE DID WE KNOW WHAT WAS COMING

LITTLE DID WE KNOW WHAT WAS COMING for us in 2021, with the increased need for mental health awareness and high-quality support services to the community, it was apparent that we were still in a state of emergency. Thousands of August Blast wounds were still unheard, unseen, and unhealed, all while the country has been sinking deeper into a total socio-economic collapse and literal darkness. The Communications department at embrace stepped up to the responsibility and pushed against odds, while dealing with internal departmental changes and a very fluid unstable environment. This section covers the multiple activities of the department as well as a few important measurable results of the growth and impact we achieved for mental health in general and Embrace in specific. This impact was a direct result of diligent, passionate, and committed team members that aimed very high and worked relentlessly to fulfill Embrace's mission. Embrace's communications team, and through its agility, collective support, unwavering collaborative efforts, and dedication to the mission, launched 4 nationwide large-scale campaigns and multiple activations across Embrace's platforms which grew to outstanding engagement levels from advocates and audiences. A significant target for us in 2022 is a segmented expansion in demographics, raising male following, and reaching areas further away from Beirut and Mount Lebanon, to reach Bekaa, Akkar, and the southern region.

## WHAT WE WERE UP TO IN 2021



# OUR ONLINE PLATFORM OVERVIEW

Total Number of posts per Platform

 **220**

 **220**

 **353**

Type of posts split

**40** Posts Lifeline

**11** Posts A&O

**20** Posts EMHC

**64** Posts General

**18** Posts Campaigns

**37** Videos

**30** Announcements

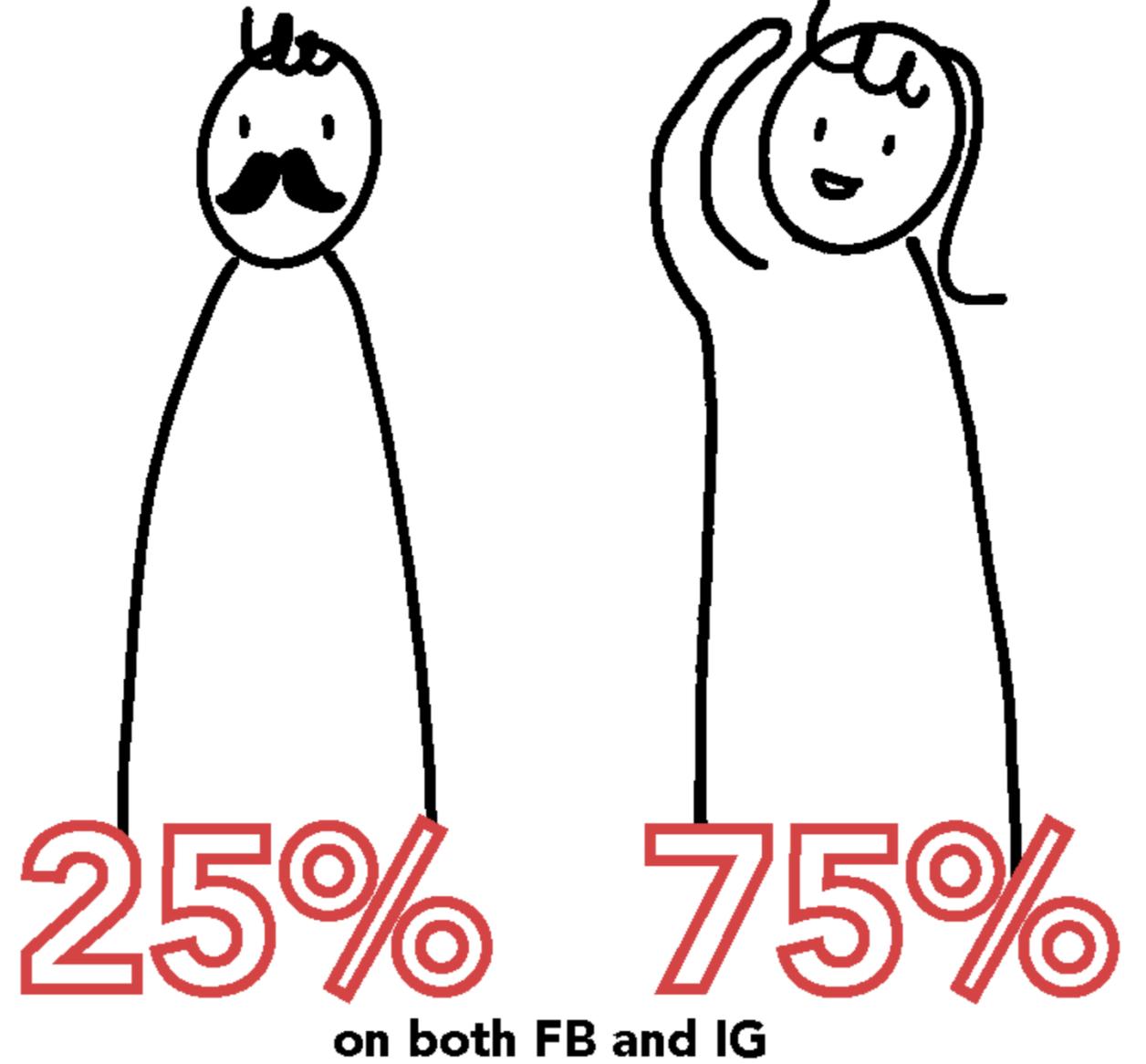
Social Media Supporters

 19,186

 30,540

 2,539

Demographics



# Growth



# of Supporters

Percentage growth from  
Jan 2021 to Dec 2021

**23.9%**  
15,478 to 19,186



**3,708**

**56.5%**  
19,503 to 30,540



**11,037**

**52.2%**  
1,668 to 2,539



**911**

# Top-performing **post** of 2021



## Hussein Bourji post - July 8, 2021



2,949



211



751



153



Accounts reached: **25,525** out of which  
9,828 were non-followers



1.1k



35



92



Accounts reached **41.1k**

# Top-performing video of 2021



## Hidden Wounds of August Blast - July 28, 2021

  19,082  328  10,892  2,382

 Accounts reached: **129,789** out of which 112,871 were non-followers

  1.9k  35  304

 Accounts reached **76.8k**

 **82,031** views



**Rundown of the Top 12 Performer Posts of 2021 - engagement rate %**

**JANUARY**



Pharmacies Collaboration (Jan 18)



**FEBRUARY**



Valentine's at Embrace (Feb 14)



**MARCH**



International Women's Day (Mar 8)



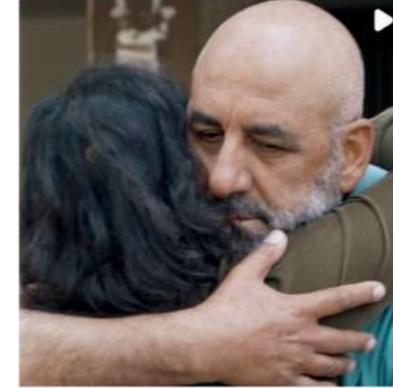
**APRIL**



Sexual Assault Support Tips (Apr 28)



**MAY**



Talking Saves Lives Campaign (May 21)



**JUNE**



Hike (June 20)



**JULY**



Hussein Bourji Testimonial (Jul 8)



**AUGUST**



Tony Sawma Testimonial (Aug 31)



**SEPTEMBER**



Into the Dawn (Sep 13)



**OCTOBER**



Red Cross Awareness (Oct 20)



**NOVEMBER**



BreakdownAFD80 (Nov 29)



**DECEMBER**



Lifeline Operator Testimonial (Dec 22)



# CAMPAIGNS



# العكس بيطول العمر



## The Story behind the “Talking Saves Lives” Campaign

The stories of Lara, Raja, Karim and Faten resemble the stories of many individuals residing in Lebanon who are facing similar strenuous living conditions and struggling, daily, due to the economic and social deterioration Lebanon is facing.

As part of our mission to raise awareness about the importance of taking care of our mental health, this campaign served as a reminder that the Lifeline 1564 (The National Emotional Support and Suicide Prevention Hotline) is available to listen and help anyone in distress.

# CAMPAIGN REPORT FINDINGS: CAMPAIGN TIMEFRAME CALLS

# 100+ calls

Call volume appeared to be slightly larger during the campaign period by approximately 100 calls (compared to before the campaign period)

- This increase in call volume was accompanied by only small changes (+/- 2%) across different demographics variables and types of calls. 1-2% increase in the South region reach, and a small increase in emotional distress and suicide ideation calls were detected.





#THERE\_ARE\_HIDDEN\_WOUNDS  
THAT REMAIN  
UNTREATED  
DONATE TO MENTAL HEALTH

**HIDDEN WOUNDS  
REMAIN UNTREATED  
AUGUST 2021**

One-year after the Beirut Blast, and so many unhealed wounds ooze and emotions resurface, many of which remain untold, unheard & unseen and thus untreated. To make sure the world hears this, Embrace, in collaboration with the Director Samia Badih and the Beirut Film Institute created and produced wholeheartedly a film to tell the story of the many hidden wounds that, since August 4 and until today, remain untold, unheard, and thus untreated. 6:07 is still ticking.

It serves as a reminder that, today, we still need the support of all people who believe that mental health is an essential gateway to wellbeing.

The film resonated nation-wide and internationally and contributed to raising voice that mental health continues to be a priority, and that there is no mental health without justice.

The film also helped raise generous donations to support Embrace's Community Mental Health Center, offering free mental health services, from September of 2020. The film was released on all of Embrace's digital platforms, was showcased on national television and radio and aired promoted on MTV and also published on a large network of Billboards and LED screens spread across Beirut. It was also picked up by several local and international press agencies and television networks.



# EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES



## INTO THE DAWN WALK SEPTEMBER 2021

On World Suicide Prevention Day, and each year since 2014, we walk together into the dawn to raise awareness around mental health, suicide prevention, and pay tribute to loved ones we lost to suicide.



الاحد 12 أيلول

On Sunday,  
September 12th

**WE  
WALK  
together  
INTO  
THE  
DAWN**

الساعة 5 صباحاً 5:00 AM  
From Beit Ward Restaurant  
to the Raouche Rock

EVERY 2 DAYS IN LEBANON, SOMEONE TAKES THEIR OWN LIFE

embrace

# BREAKING SILENCE ON SUICIDE CONFERENCE DECEMBER 2021

On December 10th, a conference organized by Embrace alongside NMHP, WHO, and AFD an was held at Ecole Superieure des Affaires. The conference was dubbed 'Breaking Silence on Suicide: A 360 Conference on Prevalence, Practice, Prevention and Views forward in Lebanon. Over 150 people attended as well as media outlets who covered the conference on the news.

Some of the main topics that were tackled are:

- Learnings after 4 years of operations on the National Hotline for Emotional Support and Suicide Prevention.
- A closer look at the patterns and characteristics of Suicide in Lebanon (2008-2018)
- Evaluation of Lebanon's National Helpline for Emotional Support and Suicide Prevention: Reduction of distress among callers.

10  
12  
21

The National Mental Health Programme, the World Health Organization and Embrace have the honor to invite you to a Conference under the theme

## **BREAKING SILENCE ON SUICIDE** **A 360 CONFERENCE** on Prevalence, Practice, Prevention and Views forward in Lebanon

**FRIDAY 10 DECEMBER 2021**  
**AT 10h AM**

At Auditorium Fattal - ESA Business School, 289, rue Clemenceau

Kindly note that there are no parking spots available on-premises.



**REGISTER HERE**

By Wednesday 8 December 2021, 5h PM

## SOUK EL TAYEB COLLABORATION

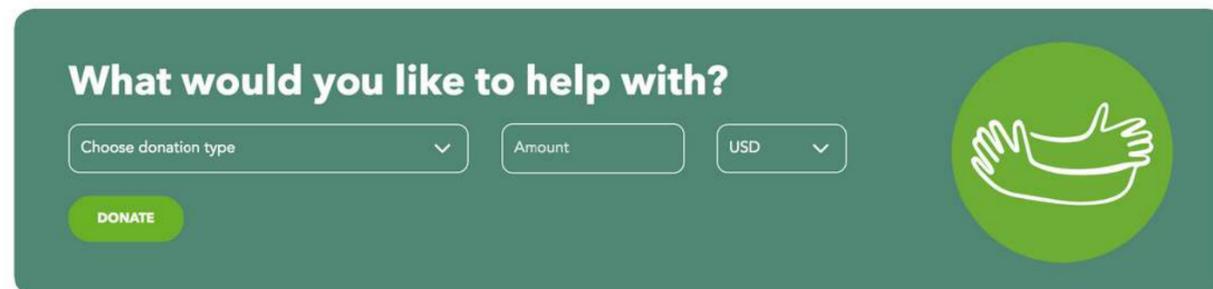
As part of our mission to ensure people with mental illnesses are respected, empowered and able to access appropriate care without the constraints of lack of knowledge, shame or limited resources, Embrace collaborated with Matbakh El Kell at Souk El Tayeb, to send a heart-warming message (in Arabic) and a flyer that details Embrace's services with every meal that is getting distributed through one of Matbakh El Kell's partners Beit El Baraka. The video was produced by the Communications Department and was shot during June, to be published in August.





# WEBSITE: 2021 WEBSITE RELAUNCH

The Embrace website needed a full revamp post-rebranding. It was a project that the team kicked off at the end of 2020 and was complete and delivered in July 2021. The website was designed by Fresh. SAL in collaboration and guidance by the Embrace Creative Team.



15117 LIFELINE CALLS RECEIVED since 2017



**EMBRACE IN THE  
MEDIA/PRESS**



# A FEW FEATURES



كيفية التعاطي مع الانتحار على الاعلام من الناحية الوقائية والعملية عند حدوثه



حاجات المجتمع ما بعد الصدمات



تزايد حالات الاكتئاب في لبنان في ظل الأزمات الراهنة و دور إمبريس في المعالجة



National Mental Health struggles as well as those faced by Embrace



أبرز النشاطات جمعية إمبريس في مجال الدعم النفسي والوقاية من الانتحار



'Amid cycle of crisis, Lebanese struggle with mental health issues'



# Top 10 Media Features



# A FEW WORDS FROM OUR TEAM MEMBERS





**HIBA  
DANDACHLI**  
COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR  
(JUNE 2020 – TO DATE)

“At a time when all I needed was to feel less alone and more empowered to speak up, Embrace came in. An experience that for the past 2 years almost has enriched every aspect of my life, including the personal one. I am driven by its community, its cause, and the team that always felt like my own small family, and for that, I am truly grateful.”

**NOUR EL ACHI**  
COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER  
(SEPTEMBER 2021 – TO DATE)

“Embrace allowed me to Embrace myself, to love myself, to accept myself and to work on myself. A beautiful energy is imbedded in all my colleagues and channeled to all of us and that’s what keeps us going. Embrace is simply HOME; a home with no judgement, a community that focuses on its team wellbeing and Lebanon’s wellbeing and for that I’m forever grateful”

**EMNE MROUE**  
CREATIVE  
(NOVEMBER 2020 – TO DATE)

“As a creative, it is always fulfilling to see yourself working for a cause. Embrace has given me the chance the talk to people about mental health and raise awareness on its importance through my creative communication and branding strategies. I have the autonomy to use my imagination and creations out there to save one person at a time”

**STEVEN  
CHEBACLO**  
COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER (OCTOBER 2021 – TO DATE)

“Embrace opened its arms for me when I was at my lowest and I am forever grateful. I had recently lost a friend to suicide and it had been years that I am battling depression and feeling worthless. The beautiful people at Embrace made me feel at home, and the work itself made me feel like I can make a difference. The passion for helping people takes over the center and is contagious & refreshing; I am glad that I am part of this loving family.”



## **AYMAN RAHME** COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER (FEBRUARY 2020 – MAY 2021)

“It's the evolution and revolutionary growth of Embrace that was self-satisfactory. It was never about making personal milestones but witnessing how everyone's dedication and hard work actually saved a life!

Being able to share stories about people's experiences with mental health. Also, working collaboratively along great team members bringing Embraces' visions to life. This created a purpose and a huge motivation to work against all adversities and uncertainties in Lebanon to spread awareness on mental health, impact our community, and thus creating a better tomorrow!”

## **ANAS SHEHAB** COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER (JUNE 2021 – SEPTEMBER 2021)

“Embrace was never a workplace, amidst all crises Lebanon was facing, Embrace was that safe space. A cause worth coming back for, worth fighting along to create a better tomorrow.

Always and forever grateful for my time there”

## **SHERINE MAKAREM** COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER (JANUARY 2021 – JUNE 2021)

“Working at Embrace provided me the opportunity to work with a team that believes everything is possible. A team that truly pushes boundaries and exceeds expectations. I worked with a team that aims to communicate all of this in the most profound and impactful way possible. I couldn't be prouder of being part of a team that echoes what Embrace is doing and planning to achieve in the future. I know that embrace just started breaking barriers and misconceptions around Mental Health. I am eager to see and applaud what Embrace will continue to do day after day. The team, staff and volunteers, is an unmatched team. A truly a dream team.”



**Mona Ghasham**  
**Director of Business Support**

# BUSINESS SUPPORT

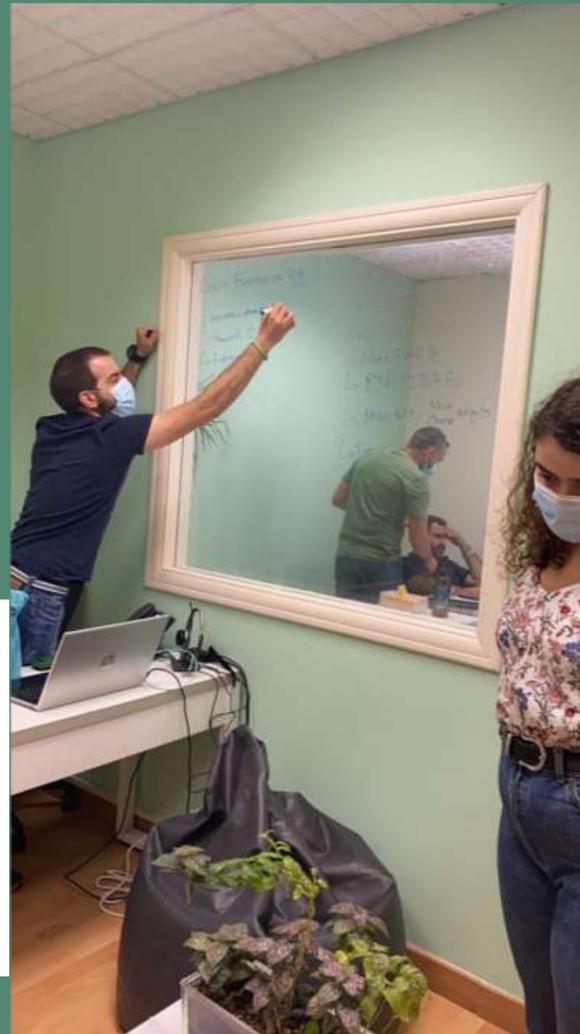
Embrace's Business Support Unit aims to efficiently manage the resources of the organization while providing quality support services to Embrace's running programs and projects, continuously enhance and streamline operations and processes, and build consistency across departments. The unit was introduced in December 2020 after the launch of Embrace Mental Health Center and the expansion of Embrace facilities.

# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- With the generous support of an in-kind donation from CISCO, the National Lifeline was able to update its hardware and new, more advanced telephony systems were integrated to make the National Lifeline a state of the art call center.
- In collaboration with Data Consult:
  1. Embrace updated the National Lifeline's Customer Relation Management System which allows more advanced data capturing and reporting, enhancing the services provided by the National Lifeline
  2. Embrace implemented in the first few months of the launching of its Community Mental Health Center, a state of the art Electronic Health Record to enhance the operations of its free clinic which provided more than 5,500 consultations in 2021.
- With the generous support of GIZ and AFD business operations returned to normal with the installation of a private generator to ensure 24/7 functioning and 0 interruption of the services of the National Lifeline. A generous donation from UNICEF also secured the cost of diesel for several months to reduce the running costs of the generator, especially amid the fuel crisis.
- In-house financial solutions were upgraded with the integration of Microsoft Dynamics to the business and finance operations.



**IMPLEMENTING THE  
NEW CALL CENTER  
HARDWARE AND  
SOFTWARE DONATED  
BY CISCO & MUREX**



# WALKING THE TALK: OUR TEAM'S WELLNESS

Embrace's mission is not just about saving lives and being there for our community, but equally about our own team's wellness and mental health. In 2021, Embrace launched "The Wellness Initiative" to maintain the health of our Hopemakers, and frontliners in the mental health scene. The aim of this program is to improve both the physical and mental health of our volunteers and staff members and assist them in adopting healthy behaviors, reduce mental exhaustion, better cope with the difficulties and stressor of everyday, and self-care, to be able to take care of others.



**We believe in the importance of a positive environment, enjoyable, supportive and safe working place.**



FREE ACRO-YOGA SESSIONS FOR OUR OPERATORS



STRESS FREE DAY





MOVIE NIGHT



HIKE

# FINANCIALS

<b>Revenue</b>	<b>936,158</b>
Unrestricted donations	252,502
Grants and restricted funds*	637,655
Other, including workshops	46,001
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>799,092</b>
Salaries and related charges	253,783
External lifeline and clinic personnel	193,300
Pilot projects and supporting services**	143,373
Telecommunication	59,073
Rent and related charges	52,959
Professional fees	44,915
Maintenance, repairs equipment and IT expenses	29,814
Generator	28,819
Campaigns and marketing	23,826
Other operating expenses	57,842
Non-operating expenses	38,175
Net foreign currency exchange gain	(126,787)
<b>Net returns</b>	<b>137,066</b>

\*Excludes awarded grants which were not deployed in 2021 (to be allocated in 2022)

\*\*Includes: Mobile crisis team, Step-by-Step Program hosted at Embrace, Medical expenses, Awareness and research activities.

For a more detailed financial report, visit our website: [www.embracelebanon.org](http://www.embracelebanon.org)

# ANNUAL REPORT 2021

[WWW.EMBRACELEBANON.ORG](http://WWW.EMBRACELEBANON.ORG)

embrace