

## Lebanon: NGO Report on MIPAA Progress 2002–2007. Completed Questionnaire by Dar Al-Ajaza Al-Islamia Hospital (DAIH)

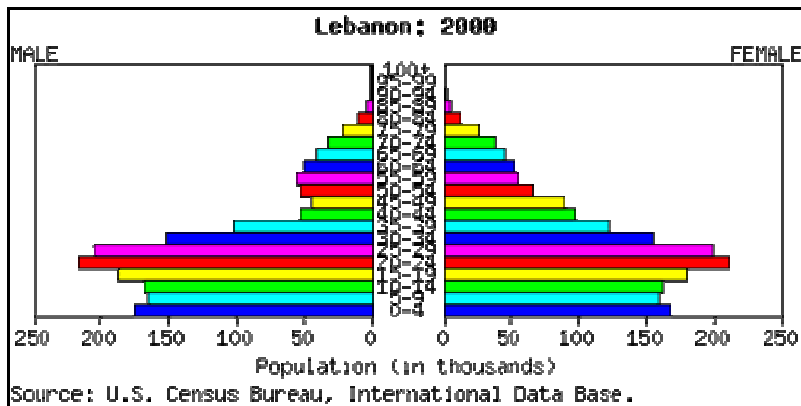
Like many countries in the world and particularly in the Middle East, Lebanon suffers from an unstable political situation and insecurity that have a negative impact on its economy. Consequently, the government's social and health services are affected as well.

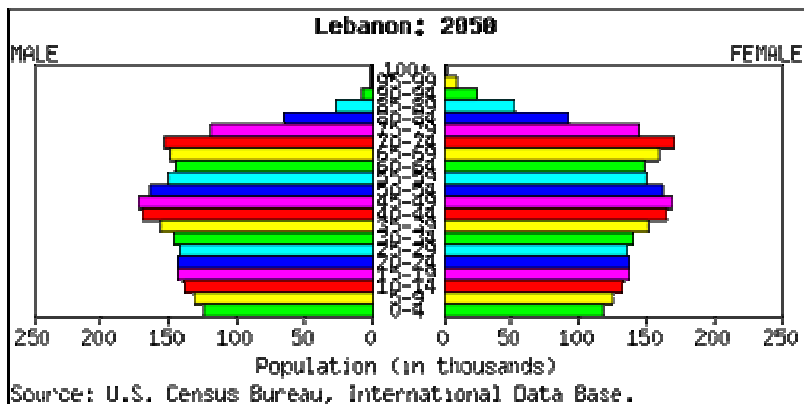
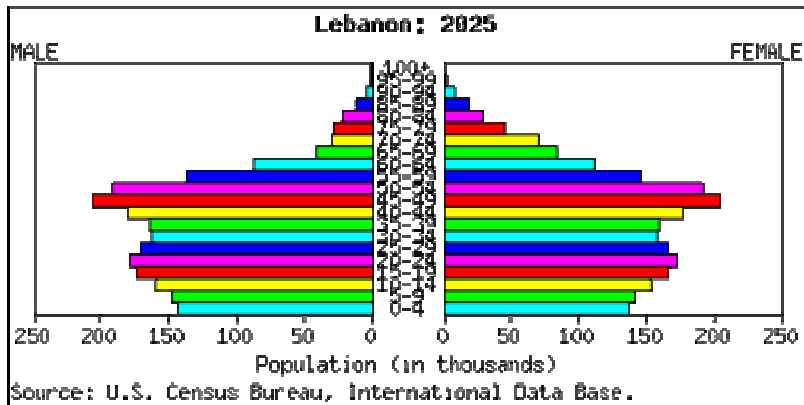
For this reason, the NGO's dealing with the elderly are critical to filling this gap in different ways, such as: health and social benefits, raising awareness in gerontology, defending old age population's rights, securing preventive medicine in geriatrics to limit the decrease of autonomy, and more.

### Demographics Aspects:

A study conducted by the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) in 2004 showed that the percentage of Lebanese population aged 65 years and above is 7.4% in the total population (except the population living in the refugee camps). But if we take the threshold level of 60 years and above, the percentage will surpass 10% (14.7% in Beirut). On the other hand, the life expectancy at birth increased from 54 years in the 1950s to 71 years in 1996 and almost 74 years in 2006.

In addition, the family size decreased due to the decrease in the fertility rate from 4.6 in 1970 to 2.1 in 2005, and the mortality rate decreased from 9.1‰ in 1970 to 7.1‰ in 2005.





### **Elderly NGOs in Lebanon:**

Elderly NGOs in Lebanon were first established at the beginning of the twentieth century. Their main role was restricted to helping homeless elderly people find places to sleep and eat without medical supervision. They were simple hospices.

Our NGO, Dar Al-Ajaza Al-Islamia hospital (DAIH), was established in 1954 with the capacity to accommodate 33 patients. At present, capacity has increased gradually to reach 700 patients distributed into two departments; Geriatrics with 350 elderly patients and Psychiatry with 350 patients.

DAIH provides all its services for free to about 98% of its patients. The hospital depends financially on two main sources: the first is a stable source from the Ministry of Health which supports 40% of the costs) and the second an unstable or variable one that depends on charity and other donations.

Our main objectives in DAIH are:

- To ensure specialized elderly care services for the society
- To raise awareness concerning elderly rights in different fields
- To ensure educational support for students and researchers in geriatrics and gerontology

- To ameliorate the living conditions for the elderly people
- To support families who are unable to provide good care of their own elderly members (mainly those without any social security coverage, representing about 50% of the Lebanese elderly population)

### **Permanent National Commission for the elderly:**

In compliance with the international strategy and recommendations set by the World Assembly on Ageing (WAA) aimed at responding to the challenges and needs of ageing population in the twenty-first century, we are doing the following:

The Lebanese government decided to establish a permanent national commission for the elderly (PNCE) whose main task would be advisory, acting as an implementation arm to the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA.)

Tasks and roles of the PNCE:

- Conducting a national needs assessment survey on the status of the elderly people and on existing institutions catering to their needs
- To establish a sound database on the status of the elderly people in Lebanon and to obtain a preliminary profile on the major health, social and economic problems they face
- To help MOSA in upgrading its existing service delivery to this age group
- To improve the status of the elderly people by allowing them to maintain a responsible, active and accountable role in society

The PNCE officially launched its activities on June 23, 1999. It was established through the collaboration of public sector, private sector and NGOs.

### **Implementation of the Madrid Plan:**

In order to respond to the three priority directions of the Madrid plan (older persons and development; advancing health and well-being into old age; ensuring enabling and supportive environments), the Ministry of the Social Affairs, through the PNCE including NGOs (DAIH is one of the three NGOs representing the 160 elderly institutions working in Lebanon), has achieved the following accomplishments :

- The organization of seminars, conferences and media-oriented programs dealing with all the problems faced by the elderly
- The declaration of a national grandparents day on the last Sunday of June
- The participation in the international day for the elderly on October first of each year
- The participation in the second meeting of the national Arab committees (March 2000)

- The organization of a national workshop on the situation and needs of the elderly ( health problems/existing social and economic status of the elderly/services offered by the public and private sectors/ a law project concerning an optional social security health plan)
- The participation in the second World Assembly on Ageing held in Madrid in April 2002
- The participation in delivering recommendations concerning the MOSA population and household study conducted since 1996 in order to draft new policy, secure services and plans in accordance with needs
- The creation of 33 elderly day care centers throughout Lebanon that provide health services, awareness and social activities with the main objective of breaking elderly isolation and solitude, improving their capacities and involving them into local development projects
- The participation in studies concerning elderly with the close collaboration of Arab and international organizations
- The organization of workshops for staff who work and care for older persons that will improve their knowledge in this field
- The creation of a website for the PNCE
- The proposal to create a senior citizen card project providing many facilities and services that is still under implementation.
- The proposal to enhance initiatives in gerontology in different fields that is still under implementation.

Unfortunately, the dramatic events happening in Lebanon since 2005 retarded our projects. But, we still have the willingness and hope to attend to our objectives in the near future.