

ACTIVITY REPORT 2020



 **sos**
Chrétien d'Orient

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PRESIDENT'S WORD



In 2020, SOS Chrétiens d'Orient "SOS Christians of the East" has held out in pain and in spite of the pain.

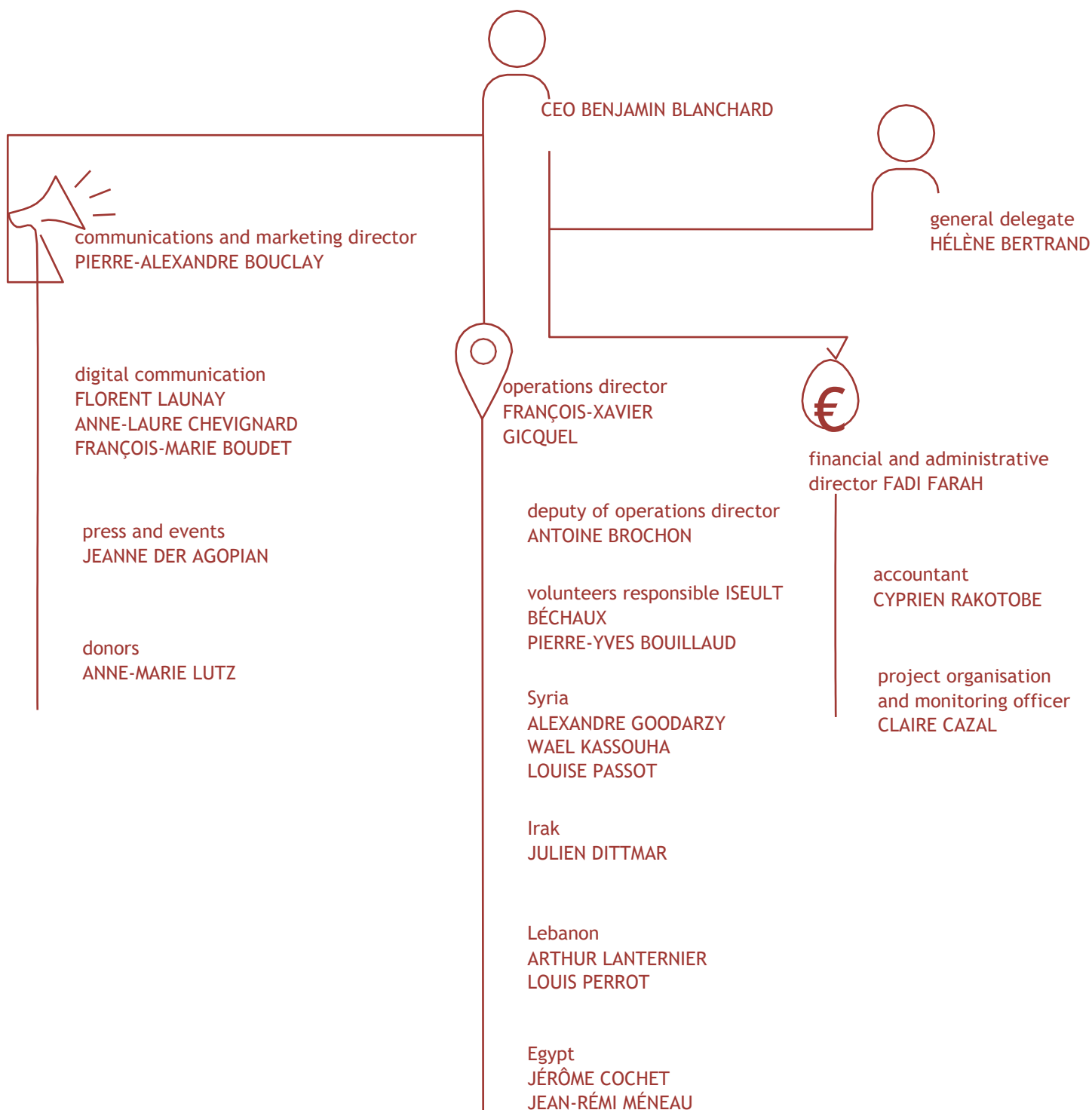
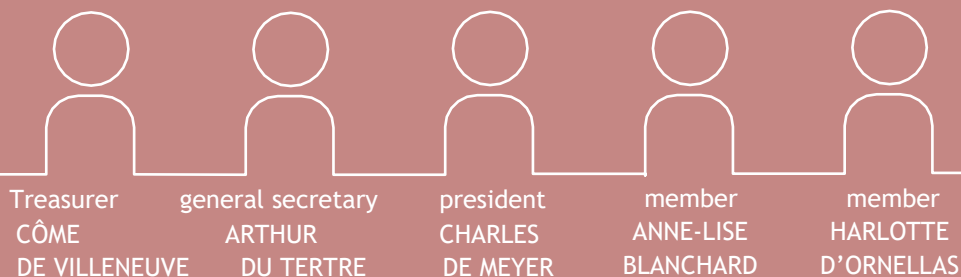
Our organization was on all the fronts of the Middle East and the Caucasus, but it was not spared from violent events. There was the heinous disappearance of four of our collaborators in Iraq, which did not fail to shake the morale of many of our friends. Despite this trauma, our teams have continued to redouble their efforts to maintain our permanent presence in all

our mission countries. Even if their captivity ended happily, it was also an opportunity to reflect deeply on the meaning of our collective mission. We owed it to the families of these four captives, and to the tens of thousands of supports received during this delicate period. This reflection has led to one conclusion: we are proud of our action. The recognition of the quality of our action extends now abroad, where many actors, sometimes from states, encourage the work of our organization. This recognition is obviously satisfying, but it does not constitute the core of our service.

The difficult crises arising from the socio-political unrest in Lebanon, the dramatic explosion in the port of Beirut on 4 August 2020, and the infamous Azeri aggression against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, were once again an opportunity to see the responsiveness and ingenuity of our teams. **Beside the refugees of Goris or the wounded of the Quarantine, the volunteers in shirts with the red heart were at work everywhere to express the intense solidarity of our donors with the suffering Christians.** It is therefore with great satisfaction that I note that our progress in administrative and financial matters has not affected the creativity of our teams to accompany numerous projects that support Christian families who wish to live and prosper in the land of their fathers. The horrors and tribulations of managing the Covid-19 crises and the consequences of the epidemic have only strengthened our conviction that it is urgent to mobilize for our older brothers in the faith.

Charles de Meyer,
President of SOS Chrétiens d'Orient

ORGANIGRAM of 2020



BUDGETS DISTRIBUTION

reconstruction
of patrimony
and culture

Reconstruction of churches
and houses, financing
cultural and spiritual
activities

15%

medical

distribution of medicines
funding of medical caravans,
construction or renovation of
hospital facilities

28%

27%

food aid
and
hygiene

distribution of food,
water, hygienic products,
emergency missions and
daily missions

30%
education

Educational support, help for
children, financing teachers,
supplies and patronage,
construction of schools...

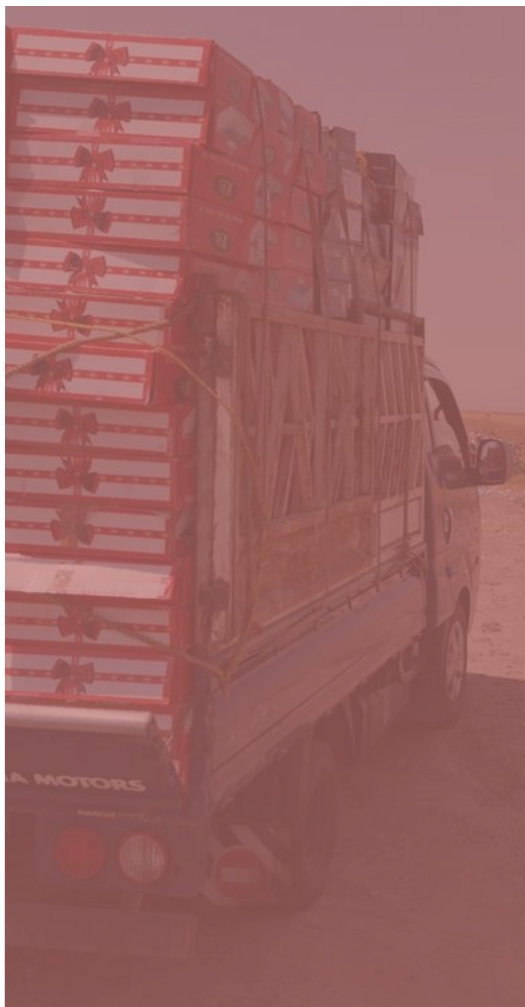
Numbers



2000

VOLUNTEERS SEND SINCE

2013



20,000

FAMILLES ASSISTED REGURLALRY



6 MILLION

EUROS OF MEDECINES
DISTRIBUTED



OUR MAIN MISSIONS

The central objective of our organization is to enable Eastern Christians who so desire to remain in their ancestral lands. To achieve this goal, the organization pursues six main missions: emergency aid, medical care, economic and social development, education, youth, patrimonial and cultural development and finally the reconstruction.



Security threats in the Middle East directly affect the most vulnerable. For years, Eastern Christians have been prey to persecution or humanitarian distress that directly threatens their physical integrity and their conditions of life. This is why, in times of crisis, SOS Chrétiens d'Orient acts by providing effective emergency relief. This means providing water and food, but also basic equipment, hygiene products, blankets, heating and, when necessary, housing.

The organisation sets up actions adapted to the context in order to best respond to the needs of the population in coordination with the relevant authorities and actors. The aim is to save lives, reduce suffering and ensure the safety of the population.



MEDICAL CARE

A situation of armed conflict or of war, leads inevitably to catastrophic health and human consequences for the population. This can result in the proliferation of epidemics as well as in a large number of civilian casualties due to bombing or shooting at the civilian population.

SOS Chrétiens d'Orient provides a medical care for sick people while increasing the resilience of displaced or refugee populations. The aim is also to strengthen the countries' capacity to intervene in health matters by developing support mechanisms at both national and local levels to help the populations as closely as possible. The organization also funds pharmacies, mobile infirmaries, medical practices and the purchase of health equipment. The organization also strengthens and rehabilitates existing infrastructures and health centres.



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPPEMENT

SOS Chrétiens d'Orient enables Christian populations in the East to find work in areas where unemployment is very high. Thanks to solidarity loans with zero or negative interest rates, the selected candidates obtain financial aid to launch or relaunch their activity. The association also participates in the implementation of large-scale agricultural projects essential to the economic development of towns and villages (wells, vineyards, olive groves, orchards, etc.)

In terms of development aid, the organization's volunteers favour local businesses in order to give work back to the local population. This allows local actors to actively participate in the recovery of their own economy and will therefore be better able to tackle possible future crises. In addition, we only favour projects that are based on the capacities and means of local communities and authorities, in order to avoid any waste and to significantly reduce the beneficiaries' dependence on humanitarian aid.



EDUCATION

With the aim of helping Christian populations to stay in their own land, SOS Chrétiens d'Orient is constantly taking care of more than 20,000 families or approximately 100,000 people. Protecting the most vulnerable from the violence of war and guaranteeing their future is just as important as meeting their basic needs. This is why our volunteers spend a lot of time with the youngest children to provide them real moral support. SOS Chrétiens d'Orient is particularly keen to provide a permanent support to Christian children in the Middle East to ensure both their protection and their development in the heart of countries that suffer the war. This is why, in areas where conditions allow, we rebuild or rehabilitate schools so that these children can continue their education.

We also support young displaced persons or victims of war by creating patronages, recreation centres, pitches and various educational activities to enable them to remain within a social and educational framework that they need.

A group of people, including a man in a white t-shirt and jeans, a woman with a backpack, and others, are walking through ancient stone ruins. The ruins consist of large, weathered stone blocks and walls, some with arched doorways. The scene is set against a clear blue sky. A red banner with white text is overlaid at the bottom of the image.

PATRIMONIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPPEMENT

SOS Chrétiens d'Orient is committed to multiplying and developing projects that promote the Christian identity and heritage of the Middle East in order to ensure that the Christian populations remain rooted in their land. We achieve to this goal by the provision of sustainable humanitarian aid through rehabilitation, reconstruction and rooting actions to enable populations to rebuild on their own territory. Our volunteers work on the ground to revaluation historical sites and maintain an active spiritual life through pilgrimages, prayer vigils, etc. The development of sustainable rootedness enables us to prevent future crises by analysing the causes of the population's vulnerability. Cultural and social rootedness prove that is a powerful factor of resilience.



RECONSTRUCTION

SOS Chrétiens d'Orient is committed to providing Eastern Christians with healthy housing, which is an essential condition for leading a healthy and decent life. The organization is therefore present in the field with populations in post-war countries in order to help them rebuild their homes and their heritage. The main objective is to enable the Eastern Christians to return to their land and live in their cities devastated by war. This involves the reconstruction of houses, churches, schools, hospitals, etc. After an audit, the organization finances equipment and workforce and provides a list of suppliers and engineers to carry out the reconstruction projects in direct partnership with the beneficiaries.

THEY SUPPORT US

SOS Chrétiens d'Orient has gained many supporters and partners, both in France and abroad, thanks to the effectiveness of the intervention method in the heart of the disaster areas in the Middle East. The association has received the support and blessing of French religious figures such as Monseigneur Rey, Bishop of Fréjus Toulon, Monseigneur Centène, Bishop of Vannes, and Monseigneur Aillet, Bishop of Bayonne and Oloron.

His Holiness Theodore II, Pope of the Coptic Orthodox, His Holiness Ignatius Ephrem II Karim, Patriarch of the Syriac Orthodox and His Beatitude Joseph I Absi, Patriarch of the Greek-Melkite Catholics, His Excellency Mgr Najeeb, Chaldean Archbishop of Mossul. SOS Chrétiens d'Orient is also supported by many personalities such as Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, former President of the Republic, who passed away in 2020 and whose tireless support for the Christians of the East we salute. We can also mention Jean d'Ormesson (+) of the Académie Française, Max Gallo (+) of the Académie Française, Jean Tulard of the Institut, General Bruno Dary, former military governor of Paris, Doctor Adel, a faithful companion of Sister Emmanuelle's work, the singer Vianney, the actors Michael Lonsdale and Mike Massy, the chefs Joy-Astrid Poinot and Yves Camdeborde.

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing +
former President of the French Republic
Honorary President of SOS Chrétiens
d'Orient



Jean d'Ormesson +
From the Académie française



Vianney
Singer



Michael Lonsdale +
Actor and writer



Max Gallo +
From the Académie
française



Jean Tulard
from the Institut

Theodore II
Pope of Alexandria
Patriarch of All Africa
and of the See of St Mark of the Coptic
Orthodox



Gregory III Laham
Patriarch emeritus of Antioch
and of all the East, of Alexandria and
Jerusalem of the Greek Melkite Catholics



Denis Tillignac
Writer



Dominique Rey
bishop of Fréjus-
Toulon



General Benoît Puga
grand chancellor
from the Légion d'Honneur



**Yves
Camdeborde**
Head chef

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2020

DIAPPEARENCE OF FOUR EMPLOYEES

On 20 January, four of our employees disappeared in Baghdad, Iraq. Immediately, we set up a crisis unit that worked day and night to do everything possible to find them safe and sound. We remained constantly at the disposal of the French authorities who were conducting the investigation in conjunction with their Iraqi counterparts. Our officials took care to preserve the strict confidentiality of any information that we received. They also, as much as possible, accompanied the families of the missing and tried to protect them from harmful intrusions.

On 26 March, a press release from the Elysée announced the liberation of our four friends after sixty-six days of detention: "The President of the Republic welcomes the release of our three compatriots Antoine Brochon, Julien Dittmar, Alexandre Goodarzy and the Iraqi Tariq Mattoka, all employees of the NGO SOS Chrétiens d'Orient France has made every effort to achieve this outcome. The President of the Republic expresses his gratitude to the Iraqi authorities for their cooperation". We thank the French authorities for their work, as well as the Iraqi authorities, who were able to achieve the release of our friends. SOS Chrétiens d'Orient also thanks all its supporters for the incredible movement of prayers and solidarity which was formed at the moment when this tragic event was announced, and which continued for weeks, including after the release of our employees.

On their return, our friends gave several conferences to testify to their story. One of them, Alexandre Goodarzy, wrote a book, "kidnapped in Irak" (Sophia Institute Press) in which he recounts their ordeal and the five years he spent in Syria with SOS Chrétiens d'Orient.

This ordeal was for the organization the opportunity to live its first concrete experience of crisis communication.



CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

Since the beginning of the crisis due to the spread of Covid-19 in the world and particularly in the Middle East, SOS Chrétiens d'Orient reorganised itself to face an unprecedented situation. First of all, we took care to repatriate the majority of our volunteers as soon as possible, anticipating the coming confinement. A few days before the restrictive measures, including home isolation and airport closures, we were able to send most of our volunteer's home.

The work continued on the ground with long-term volunteers and permanent staff. We continued our activities in all our mission countries. We had also to dealing with the floods that devastated a slum near Cairo during the lock down. In general, our teams helped the poorest families and isolated people. The most serious consequence of the coronavirus was the forced unemployment of thousands of precarious workers. Our teams distributed foods, hygiene kits, hydro alcoholic gel and masks. They also taught or reminded people of the basic steps to take to avoid catching viruses - health precautions are often ignored or neglected in the field.



SUPPORTTING MGR NAJEEB NOMINATED FOR SAKHAROV PRIZE

The Chaldean archbishop of Mosul and Aqra in Iraq, Mgr Najeeb has been nominated for the 2020 Sakharov Prize for his action to preserve Eastern Christian communities from Islamist persecution, in human terms and in terms of the destruction of heritage. SOS Chrétiens d'Orient accompanied him during this campaign. The Sakharov Prize, awarded by the European Union's bodies, rewards people who have worked to defend human rights and fundamental freedoms. It also honours actions in the service of minorities. In this regard, Bishop Najeeb was the perfect candidate because, as we argued, he was the only one of the candidates who had actually and concretely saved lives and heritage in immediate danger. As a reminder, when the Islamic State organization entered Mosul in 2014, Bishop Najeeb organised the evacuation of Syriac and Chaldean Christians to Iraqi Kurdistan. He also rescued members of the Shabbat and Yezidi communities. He is especially well known in Europe for having organised the rescue of several hundred ancient manuscripts, treasures of Iraqi heritage, from the clutches of the Islamists. It was in the heart of the refugee camps in Erbil that our teams forged strong bonds of friendship with Bishop Najeeb. Since then, we have been working hand in hand with him on many projects. In Brussels, it was therefore normal that one of our teams joined him to help him plead the cause of the Eastern Christians.

Mgr Najeeb was able to meet many European deputies and to draw their attention to the tragedy being played out in the Middle East. So between twenty or so candidates, he made it to the final and obtained an unexpected result.



MEETING WITH ASIA BIBI

François-Xavier Gicquel, Director of Operations of our organization, met Asia Bibi during her stay in France at the end of February 2020. A Pakistani Christian, Asia Bibi was sentenced to death in her country in November 2010, accused of blasphemy against Islam. She was finally acquitted in 2018 and moved to Canada. SOS Chrétiens d'Orient actively participated in her release by contributing to her lawyer's fees.

MEETING WITH CARDINAL TAMKEVICIUS

Charles de Meyer, President of our organization, and Hélène Bertrand, General Delegate, met with His Eminence Cardinal Tamkevicius, in Vilnius, Lithuania. Arrested by the KGB in 1983 for anti-Soviet propaganda against the State, he was sent to the Gulag. Released in 1988, his story echoes the fate of Christians in the East. His testimony invites us to place our faith and hope in God.

PURCHASE OF LAND TO BUILD A CHRISTIAN VILLAGE IN PAKISTAN

In 2017, Father Parvez launched an appeal for solidarity to which SOS Chrétiens d'Orient responded. Christians in Pakistan live in economic servitude, exploited by their landowners. Added to this a religious persecution. To remedy this, our organization, together with Father Parvez, has decided to buy a piece of land in 2020 to build a Christian village that can accommodate 300 families.

SUPPORTING THE INHABITANTS OF THE SLUM OF 15-MAY DEVASTATED BY FLOODS

In March 2020, the 15-May slum near Cairo suffered the heavy consequences of Egypt's lightning storms: twenty dead and unprecedented material damages caused by the torrents of mud. A funeral for one of the victims was held by Father Athanasius in front of a crowd of 500 people. In front of a devastated shanty town, the volunteers of SOS Chrétiens d'Orient mobilised to provide emergency aid.

BEIRUT PORT EXPLOSION

On 4 August 2020, Beirut was shaken by two explosions, leaving behind a terrible human and material toll. Immediately, Jean-Rémi Meneau, our head in Lebanon, who was present during the disaster, evacuated the volunteers to a safe place, while ensuring that the most vulnerable people were immediately offered all possible assistance.

To deal with the emergency situation, the organization undertook three major projects in parallel.

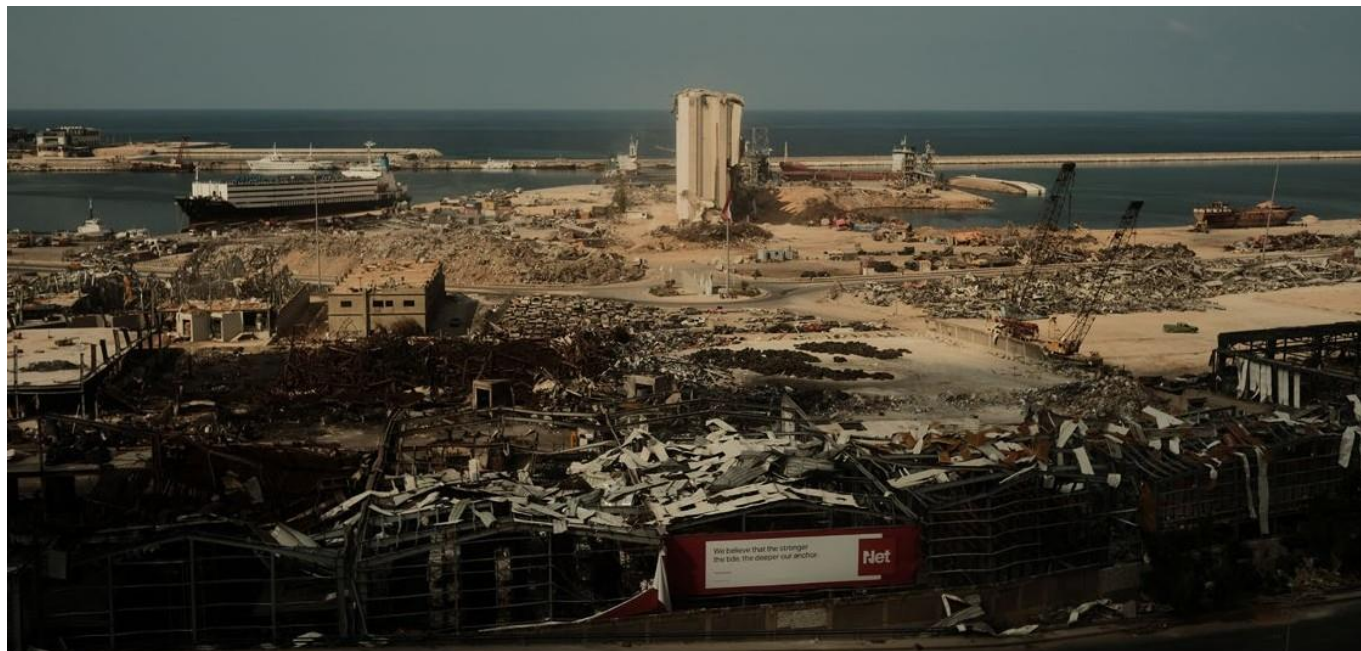
First, providing an immediate food aid to those who lost their homes or livelihoods in the explosion. Thanks to the responsiveness of all its teams, both in the mission and at headquarters, to its knowledge of the area and to its local contacts, SOS Chrétiens d'Orient received nineteen tons of food which were repackaged by its young people in the form of packs to be distributed to families in need.

Then, the volunteers rejoined the reconstruction sites: houses, schools, hospitals like the Quarantine Hospital, one of the most modern in Lebanon, where SOS Chrétiens d'Orient had supported the paediatric and neonatal unit. Located one and a half kilometres from the epicentre of explosion, its buildings were severely damaged. Thankfully, there were no casualties among the patients, but nurses were injured and the material damage was considerable.

Dr Robert Sacy, director of the unit, told us: "The dropped ceiling have fallen down, the electrical networks have been ripped open, the pipes are out everywhere. Given that my facilities are out of order, we had to evacuate the patients to the outlying hospitals." He estimates the damage at over €1,000,000 . Our organization undertook to take part in the work once the rubble removal was completed. It has now paid \$100,000.

Volunteers based in Qaa and Tripoli have arrived to help rebuilding the city.

We have also redirected our mobile dispensary, initially intended to help isolated populations in the mountains, to the capital's port, in order to offer care to the most vulnerable.



EDUCATION, THE CORNERSTONE OF SOS' COMMITMENT

The Christian schoolchildren in the East went back to school in September, which is an opportunity for the organization to continue its educational action in all our mission countries. In countries such as Lebanon or Syria, education is a cohesion factor between communities and offers children a better way to prepare their social and professional future. SOS Chrétiens d'Orient is involved in many activities in this field, such as opening or renovating schools and purchasing school equipment to support these children and quenching their thirst of learning.

SOS Chrétiens d'Orient is particularly involved in the rehabilitation of a sports pitch at Al-Amal school in Aleppo, Syria. The organization is contributing also to the rehabilitation project of the Al-Amal school in Aleppo, led by Mgr Jeanbart, Bishop Greek-Melkite Catholic of Aleppo, with the support of the Hungarian government agency "Hungary Helps". During the 2016 Paris semi-marathon, our organization pledged to donate at least €30,000 for the rehabilitation of a sports pitch at Al Amal School. As a result, €75,000 were allocated to the school in order to rehabilitate it.

Since November 2019, the young people on mission in Aleppo have been working regularly in the school's renovation site. Sometimes they weed the courtyards and the corners of the compound where the vegetation is taking over and remove a damaged fence. Another time, they fill in the shell holes in the sports pitch and remove cartridge cases and shell casings. Or they work in clouds of dust clearing away tons of rubble that have piled up in the courtyard and the various floors of the school buildings during the fighting. In half a day, the volunteers filled and removed nearly 40 bags of rubble. Shovel after shovel they clear many classrooms. In this way, they are gradually removing the countless scars of the war, even if it will take a lot of money and work to do so.



OPPENIG OF A MISSION IN ARMENIA

In September 2020, our organization opens its permanent mission in Armenia, while the population was confronted a resumption of the war with Azerbaijan, in Nagorno-Karabakh. This small self-proclaimed republic in the Caucasus is now caught in the grip of the Azerbaijanis. To date, more than 65 volunteers have been working in the field to increase support and development activities to the benefit of the region's inhabitants.

For example; an emergency operation in the hospitals of Yerevan and Stepanakert (donations of state-of-the-art medical equipment); various donations of food and hygiene packs to several hundred households in Syunik and other regions; donations of cattle to a dozen farms in Syunik; weekly actions in Vardenis and Ararat; visits to families bereaved by the conflict; material support to two orphanages in Yerevan and Shirak.

The mission has opened offices in Yerevan, Goris (Syunik region in the South) and Gyumri (Shirak region in the North).



CHRISTAMS MISSION

Every year, the Eastern faithful gathered to celebrate the birth of Christ with unabated fervour. From Mosul in Iraq, through Egypt or Syria, it is an opportunity for them to forget for a moment all the difficulties they face every day. As every year, SOS Chrétiens d'Orient organises gift distributions and joins each of them in bringing a message of hope in better days to be coming.

In Mosul, Iraq, some Christians were able to celebrate mass in the newly restored St Thomas church.

In Cairo, Egypt, little Christian rag pickers sang Christmas carols with enthusiasm. Aged between six and ten, these children escape the harsh conditions of rubbish work and life on the streets of the capital three times a week to find solace in music class. With the help of volunteers from SOS Chrétiens d'Orient, miss Marlène's students have been assiduously rehearsing this Christmas concert.

In Beirut, Lebanon, SOS Chrétiens d'Orient joined forces with the Albert Nassar Foundation to organise a gift donation. Two hundred children aged between three and ten, coming from families severely beaten by the explosion, received numerous toys and candies from Santa Claus himself. On the faces of the parents, one can read a mixture of joy and relief. For an afternoon, their children forget that outside, rubble need to be removed, that outside, crisis is hitting their families hard. Christmas carols give them hope.



PERSPECTIVES OF 2021

- Supporting continually the populations affected by the Coronavirus Crisis
- Strengthening our support for Lebanon by making contact with various decision-makers
- Acting to improve the situation of Armenians in Artsakh and in the Republic of Armenia
- Continue the occasional visits to Ethiopia with a view to opening a mission in a medium term (2021 or 2022)
- Launch the reconstruction project in Mosul with Bishop Najeeb



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TELEGRAM

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