



ANNUAL AGENCY REPORT 2019-2020

**Presented at the Humanserve Annual General Meeting
October 22, 2020**

Submitted by Vanessa Ali, President

Humanserve International Society for Relief and Development is a not-for-profit society incorporated in the Province of Alberta. The society works with local and international non-government organizations to provide educational, community health and social services in Lebanon and Palestine.

In 2019–2020, Humanserve continued its mandate to provide relief and development overseas and to educate the Canadian public with regards to conditions of life for disadvantaged populations in the Middle East. With public engagement, this society endeavoured to outline the role Humanserve plays in helping to alleviate suffering and in facilitating development in partnership with NGOs in the field and the role played by Canadian donors and funding agencies. The following is a summary of the most significant events in this society's past fiscal year (October 1, 2019 – September 30, 2020):

Projects

Kindergarten for Syrian Refugees – YR V – This project, first begun in September 2014, funded an educational program for 9 months (one academic year) to improve the conditions of Syrian refugees living in Lebanon. As well, the project aimed to focus on psycho-social activities and improve the health of children (ages 4 to 6 years) through health and hygiene puppet shows and plays.

Due to the success and overwhelming need for this project, we began running it for a fifth year in a row starting in September 2019 with the same goals and objectives. The first and second overseas transfers totaling \$38,512.71 have been made and the remaining 10% hold-back of \$3055.29 is held in reserve pending the final report from our overseas partner PARD who administered and delivered the project in the field.

Al-Assaf Family Sponsorship – After the federal government rejected our application to sponsor a family of seven currently living in a refugee camp in the Bekaa Valley, Humanserve entered a sponsorship agreement with the Mennonite Central Committee of Alberta and obtaining approval from the AGLC to donate funds to MCCA. In our 2018-19 fiscal year, a payment of \$27,300 was put in trust by MCCA for the family. This year, MCC required an additional \$4,700.00 due to the increase in the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) rate by Immigration Canada and that is also being held in reserve for the family by MCC.

The Al-Assafs have undergone their interviews and medical tests by Immigration Canada staff in Lebanon, however, the current pandemic, political unrest, country-wide strikes in Lebanon and the Beirut Port explosion in Beirut have slowed the immigration process down immensely and applications are taking much longer to go through. The situation is very fluid and therefore it is not known how long it may take for the family to get final word and hopefully receive their VISAs.



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Fundraising

Zakat – There were no zakat donations in this fiscal year and no call for funds was made before or during Ramadan. There were no zakat donations in the previous year.

General Donations - \$40.00 in unsolicited general donations were made this year. This is a \$369.14 decrease from the previous year.

Products and Handicrafts – We participated in the Just One World Sale in November 2019. \$2,526.75 worth of products were sold which was a 100% increase from the previous year.

Pay Pal – PayPal allows the ability for electronic donations on our website. In 2019-2020, there were no donations collected via PayPal, which is \$20 less than the year before. There were a couple of private product sales (pottery) and this has been noted as part of the *Products and Handicrafts* revenues noted above.

Casino – Although we were scheduled for a casino in September 2020, our event was cancelled due to the Starlight Casino facility in WEM remaining closed after COVID 19 restrictions were put in place.

Field Visits

A field visit would have been scheduled in spring of 2020 in conjunction with the *Kindergarten Project*, but due to travel bans and closures caused by the COVID 19 pandemic, combined with the political unrest and uncertainty in Lebanon, it has been postponed. The last field visit was made to Lebanon in May 2018 by Vanessa and Nizar Ali and Evan Worman.

Public Engagement

Web Site (www.Humanserve.org) - Our site continues to be an efficient form of public engagement as well as a time and money-saving administrative tool.

eNewsletters – A few updates to our subscribers were sent via our account on the MailChimp platform regarding the *Just One World* sale in November, fundraising for the Beirut Port Explosion and announcements regarding the AGM and membership drive.

Social Media – Any information sent out via MailChimp is similarly posted on HSI's Facebook and Twitter accounts

Events - Mostly due to COVID 19 restrictions on gatherings, no typical public engagement events were planned or carried out during this fiscal period

AGLC Compliance Audit

In August 2019, HSI was informed that we are being audited by AGLC as part of the regular, random audits that they do of the organizations which have casino licenses. We received the final report from AGLC which gave us a good grade on accounting procedures but which underscored some required procedural and by-law changes and reinforced restrictions on how much of our casino funds can be used overseas going forward. Committee meetings were held over the summer and a submission was made to Alberta Societies to amend our existing bylaws in accordance with AGLC's recommendations.



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Summary

The onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic made this a very challenging year for Humanserve and our mandate. So many of our fundraising and public engagement activities were cancelled outright or have otherwise been curtailed for an indefinite period to come. As well, with Lebanon being our prime country for projects, planning for potential future projects is currently tenuous due to the civil unrest and corruption in the country.

In the coming year, Humanserve will try to raise monies so we can continue to support our partners overseas, but given our given our lack of funds and no idea when our next casino license will be granted, it is difficult to plan and we don't want to make promises that we cannot keep. We will endeavour to keep our funders and the Canadian public informed of our activities and about the humanitarian aspects of life for disadvantaged populations in the Middle East. We remain committed to exploring new direction for Humanserve in our effort to grow and sustain this society's vitality and we are ready to forge relationships with deserving new partners as the opportunities arise. We also are focusing on renewing our board and gaining more general members in accordance with our recently amended bylaws and AGLC's recommendations.

Vanessa Ali, President

Edmonton, Alberta
October 21, 2020