

*“There is sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness, but of power. They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues. They are messengers of overwhelming grief and unspeakable love”,*

Four August 2020, Beirut transformed in a second, time stopped at 6:09 pm, and an irresistible amount of tears were shed in each of its corners. An estimated 2,750 metric tons of ammonium nitrate placed inside a port warehouse caused a massive explosion where at least 150 people were killed, more than 5000 injured, and 300,000 displaced from their destroyed homes. It is indeed an unexpected tragedy, however remember that this article will show you a fragment of hope, a fragment of unity, and a fragment of faith in the youth of tomorrow.

Where is the hope in a destroyed city you might ask? Six August 2020 at 5:00 pm a WhatsApp group named “Rotaract Volunteers” was created, at this exact moment this group includes 250 registered volunteers. Rotaractors from North to South Lebanon, directed to Beirut and began distributing themselves each club to an area. When asked about Rotaract’s role in building back Beirut, Past DRR Emile Mouawad stated:

*“From day 1 of this devastating tragedy, Rotaractors of Lebanon took an immediate step of going down to the destroyed area of Beirut joining thousands of volunteers daily in providing the residents with urgent needs of food and medical supplies as well as helping them clean the debris in their houses and off the streets, which will be followed by a reconstruction phase in the upcoming days. In addition to that, the International Rotaract community showed immense support from the first moment and initiated an International Rotaract crowdfunding campaign with Rotaractors and friends contributing from all over the world, where all funds raised will be used to build and reconstruct the destroyed houses of our beloved capital”.*

International support is one of the aspects that kept Lebanon’s population standing strong, kind people from all over the world showed solidarity. Rotaract Academy President Hala Ghossoub expressed how shaken and grateful she felt after receiving messages from Rotaractors from Cyprus, France, Germany, Mexico, Guatemala, USA, Netherlands, Spain, Belgium, Jordan, UAE, India, Turkey, Romania, Canada, Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco and much more five minutes after the incident happened. *“The support we are receiving from International Rotaractors is what is keeping us full of energy to proceed through this, we are so blessed to have such a Rotaract family”* she affirmed. Generous people from all over the realm sent any kind of aid they could, and Rotaractors launched a crowdfunding campaign that will assist in building broken houses stone by stone. Bassel Wehbe, a Lebanese citizen came all the way from Bahrain where he was an active Rotaracter there and stated:

*“Being a Rotaractor surrounded by fellows with great spirit for life and selflessness motivated me to work hand in hand with them to bring back families to their homes, provide them with basic necessities (food, supplies etc.) and put a little smile on their faces despite this tragedy. Fellowship through service is not only a Rotaract motto, but also a culture and a lifestyle that helps to give back to my community and transmute this feeling of grief to hope and peace and be able to spread it around me”.*

*“Rotaract is a family, and families stick together at the finest and poorest times”*, Bassel Tamim, Head of Community Service at Rotaract Club de Beyrouth indicated that minutes after the incident he opened his phone to realize that all his Rotaract groups were buzzing with “Are you okay?” “Is everyone fine” messages.



Mohamad Fakhoury, President of Club Sour situated in South Lebanon mentioned how his club had so much drive to help that they kept on pushing and asking for a way to drive to Beirut ; to clean, donate blood, and assist. When he told them that he is going to the capital to assess how risky it is to send his club to an area that might collapse any second, their answer was: Even if it was risky, we are all together and we will take care of each other, and of Beirut. *“Their drive, energy, and enthusiasm gave me hope and strength. I felt proud and for a second I forgot the hurt and started focusing on the diverse effective ways to help and make an impact ”*, Mohamad stated.

Immediate Past President of Rotaract club de Beyrouth and VDRR Mohamad Sabbagh, *“One of the most important lessons I have learned from Rotaract, is how to overcome challenges without the need to panic. During the first 30 seconds of the incident, I was in awe and I felt numb, however we were taught during many professional development sessions, how to control ourselves, how to act in times of crisis, and how to control our feelings in order to solve the setback we are facing. In my opinion, this is what made us rush to help as soon as possible ”*.



A message from a fellow French Rotaractor, Anne Gourvennec : *“You are facing this difficult and painful situation the best way you can. For that you have all my respect and admiration. Your action in Beirut is an example for all of us in matter of solidarity, generosity, resilience and strength. I wish we can all help you in some way at some point. Don't forget you have friends here thinking about you and sending you all the force it will require to build the new Lebanon you have been dreaming about. La France vous aime!”*.

DDRR Yasmina El Assi assures, *“The greatness of a Nation is by its citizens. We, the Lebanese People are resilient souls enduring the world's hardship on our own. The recent saddening events and disasters are an opportunity for us to acknowledge that it is the time for a radical change, to start rebuilding our country and shaping our future, in Lebanon. Every time I look a Lebanese in the eye I see pain that is generating hope, persistence, compassion and most importantly patriotism. I personally will never let go of my home, of my beloved country of my Lebanon! I truly believe in the power of our citizens and in the unconditional passion of our youth. We will stand still, we will survive for Lebanon to rise again!”*.

Dear Rotaractors, From the Mediterranean team we remind you that you are a fragment of hope, a fragment of unity, and a fragment of faith in the youth of tomorrow.

