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Pediatric cardiac surgery in developing countries and the role of NGO's

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Disease prevention of any kind is very challenging in developing countries. The World Health Organization "WHO" reported that 44% of countries have less than one physician per 1,000 people. Congenital Heart Disease "CHD" is the most common birth defect and the number one cause of death for children under the age of one. 1 in 100 children is born with congenital heart disease and half of these children will need to be treated either by surgery or catheter procedures. Although most heart defects in babies can be treated, if left untreated the patient will not be able to lead a normal life and many will die before they reach their first birthday. The most common congenital heart defects are: Ventricle septal defect (VSD), Atrial Septal Defect (ASD) and tetralogy of Fallot. 1.3 million babies are born every year with CHD and 93% do not have access to free cardiac care. Because of the complexity of these surgeries and lengthy stay at the intensive care units and hospital, surgery for CHD is significantly high and most families in developing countries cannot afford the cost. Organizations such as Gift of Life International (GOLI) play a very crucial role in saving the hearts of babies and children around the world. Non for profit organizations usually use the following three options for children that need heart surgery in third world countries:

- 1- Sending patients abroad for surgery.
- 2- Missions: Visiting surgeons that will perform surgeries at equipped hospitals within the country.
- 3- Cover the cost of surgery in countries where hospitals and cardiac surgeons are available and surgery is only partially covered by the ministry of health or the UN in the case of refugees.
- 4- Establish a pediatric cardiac center and train doctors and surgeons to treat patients in their own country.

Gift of Life International "GOLI" uses all of the above methods and has helped over 30,000 children from 78 different countries. It is a matter of life and Death!

Biography

At the age of sixteen she started working with juvenile delinquents in the Lebanese prison system and continued during her time in New York working with homeless children and abused women and raising money for Lebanon from abroad. This work has continued all the way up until her current office as founder and president of Gift of Life Lebanon. Since its in foundation in 2015 Gift of Life Lebanon has managed to provide live saving heart surgery for over 200 children as well as preform over 1000 free medical checkups to disadvantaged children throughout Lebanon. In doing this work she has managed to mobilize and activate different strata within local communities particularly the youth, bringing people together across Lebanese society, in engaging the kind of work that can help foster the new leaders of the coming generation.

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