



Research Article

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History and the Concepts Underlying the Lebanese Maronite Order Affordable Housing Projects

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Abstract

Affordable housing is a worldwide crisis in the urban areas. In Lebanon, due to this crisis especially at the end of the Civil War, the Church took the initiative to implement affordable housing. Accordingly, the Lebanese Maronite Order (LMO) implemented affordable housing projects during its 300th Jubilee. The aim of this paper is to discuss the history and the concepts underlying the LMO affordable housing projects which was the subject of an evaluative research conducted in 2019 to evaluate the effectiveness of LMO's projects. This assessment study combined the evaluation of the findings with the evaluation of the implementation. A questionnaire was given to the project's beneficiaries, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with the project's managers. This study confirms the consistency of this initiative with the mission of the LMO in accordance with the guidelines of the Catholic Church and the Human Right to Adequate Housing. Due to the current housing, political, social, and economical crisis in Lebanon, LMO and the ecclesiastical institutions must multiply these projects and the Lebanese government must apply the Right to Adequate Housing and must take the initiative to implement affordable housing in collaboration with the private sector and the non-for-profit organisations.

Keywords: Affordable Housing, Housing Project, Homeownership, Right to Adequate Housing, Evaluation, Housing crisis, Emigration, Marriage, Temporal Ecclesiastical Goods, Family

1. Introduction

In the sixth chapter of his Apostolic Exhortation for Lebanon 'New Hope for Lebanon', entitled "The Church at the Service of Society," Pope John Paul II (1997) affirmed that the Church has always been at the service of society all over the world. It has a specific place in society for the liberation of people from all that hinders their human and spiritual growth. Thus, the Catholic Church had to have a role in Lebanese society, because the aftermath of the war heavily burdened the Lebanese society and

created a socio-economic crisis that affected individuals and families felt in the issues of housing, health, education and work.

Afterwards, on the basis of the report of the Special Assembly for Lebanon of the Synod of Bishops, the Pope John Paul II praised the tireless commitment, and the initiatives of "patriarchies, eparchies and religious institutes" which have put land in various Lebanese regions at the disposal of nonprofit housing projects. The Pope asked these ecclesiastical institutions to establish more of these housing projects in favor of "young couples" and "disadvantaged people".

Among those appraised institutions and orders was the Lebanese Maronite Order, which launched non-profit housing projects in 1995 on the occasion of its 300th Jubilee. In this article, we will shed light on the history of such non-profit housing projects and the concepts underlying this positioning which were the purpose of the ecclesiastical temporal goods, as well as the concern of the family as the nucleus of society and the Church. Also, we will discuss the Right to Adequate Housing as a concept that was a concern of the Church and underlay the realization of such projects.

2. The History of the Non-Profit Housing Project

In this part, we will bring to light the origin and history of the housing projects launched by the Lebanese Maronite Order. To start with, in the 90s, Lebanon experienced a critical situation. Among the problems that Lebanon had to face, that of housing crisis which was the one that arose with the most urgency as it quickly became insoluble. According to Dr. Mohamed Baydoun, Minister of Housing and Co-operatives (1990-1992), nobody could solve this crisis and politicians were not aware of it. It is true that thousands of apartments were offered for sale, but middle-income families could not afford the price. In addition, the owners of buildings refused to rent their apartments while no equitable law governed the landlord/tenant relationship (Hatem R., 1992). What caused such a problem that was unforeseen by the government?

In fact, even though the problem of housing already existed in Lebanon before the war, the direct causes related to this problem after the end of the civil war in 1990, were as follows:

- The destruction of several residential neighborhoods during the war;
- The devaluation of the national currency which prevented the Lebanese citizen from granting himself a residential unit since the price of the apartments was fixed in dollars (Hatem R., 1992);
- The old rent law;
- Demographic upheavals;
- Economic crisis;
- The absence of a national housing policy;
- The absence of a public organization in charge of the construction of social housing;
- Insufficient funding systems.

From the foundation of the Office of Habitat (مصلحة التعمير) in 1956, the State did its best to solve this problem. In fact, "the Ministry of Housing", "the Independent Housing Fund" and "the General Society of Habitat" attempted to address the problem. The government's efforts were supplemented by various other parties including the Church, but in vain.

The Synod of Bishops for Lebanon held in 1995 dealt with a number of economic and social problems and noted the importance of the housing problem by mentioning the need for the creation of 500 000 habitats (Synod of bishops, 1995). In fact, this housing shortage was a serious problem for family life and for young people because it delayed their marriage or made it more difficult. So, in various Lebanese regions, ecclesiastical institutions had taken good initiatives to make land available for housing projects. What were some of the most notable attempts?

Among those ecclesiastical institutions, the Lebanese Maronite Order took the initiative to establish non-profit housing projects, based on a study that was conducted in 1993 by the General Office of Social Affairs, which sent a questionnaire to the 54 monasteries of the Lebanese Maronite Order to diagnose the following social issues: nourishment, health, housing, education, agriculture,

pastoral activity, and job opportunity.

According to the report of father Jacob Al Skayem, the founder of the Office of Social Affairs in the Lebanese Maronite Order, in 1993, 40 monasteries responded to the aforementioned questionnaire and the following results were identified:

- 40 monasteries said that there was a need for housing projects.
- 27 monasteries raised the importance of helping the sick; some suggested improving hospitals and clinics.
- 23 monasteries had raised the need for nourishment assistance.
- 22 monasteries spoke of aid to education.
- 10 monasteries mentioned pastoral activities.
- 9 monasteries proposed to find jobs for young people or to found and / or improve technical education.
- 3 monasteries raised the need to strengthen aid in the agricultural field.

To meet the need for housing, the Office of Social Affairs - Habitat Sector, designed a program to implement the construction of habitats in the grounds of monasteries; such a program was of two faces either it was constructed by the LMO or by a cooperative or by the land's tenants themselves. The first projects implemented by LMO or a cooperative, launched in 1990s, were as follows:

- Saint Nehemtallah Al Hardini Complex - Batroun (58 apartments)
- Saint Jacques Center – Batroun (36 apartments)
- The Pilot Village of Our Lady of Tamiche (201 apartments)
- The project of Saint Joseph El Kahlouniye (64 apartments)

As for the project Our Lady of Machmouché, the monastery rented out land ranging from 500 m² to 1500 m² through a contract valid for 99 years. The ones who benefitted from the arrangement were villagers around the monastery who desired to be rooted in their villages but did not have properties to build their own houses.

Thus, the Lebanese Maronite Order, on the occasion of its 300th jubilee, aware of the gravity of the problem and concerned about the welfare of Lebanese communities and citizens, gave itself the duty to look into rational and practical approaches for the implementation of non-profit housing projects, noting that the aim behind such non-profit projects was to encourage the young to get married and to provide stability for the newlywed couples. As a consequence, those couples would cherish the sense of belonging and enjoy enough stability to eliminate the danger of immigration.

Finally, by carrying out these plans for the non-profit housing projects, according to the spirit of the Church and its teachings, the Lebanese Maronite Order did not seek trade or profit. The cost of the apartment was restricted to the fees only to continue the execution of these projects. In addition, it provided housing with good conditions and ensured the dignity of the inhabitants, respecting the criteria of the Right to Adequate Housing. What are the theoretical foundations of such projects?

3. The Temporal Ecclesiastical Goods

The first theoretical foundation is the temporal goods of the Church in general and of the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life in particular. The said temporal goods are its objective, its biblical and social ecclesiastical teaching fundamentals, and its legal administration, noting that the ecclesiastical temporal goods are movable and immovable, such as buildings, properties, lands, works, values, objects, etc., and are legally handled by the order or the congregation, being the owner and keeper of its heritage.

3.1 The Objective of Temporal Ecclesiastical Goods

The Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life are public juridic persons (Code of Canon Law, Canon 1257/1), "constituted by the competent ecclesiastical authority so that, within the purposes set out for them, they fulfill in the name of the Church, according to the norm of the

prescripts of the law, the proper function entrusted to them in view of the public good" (Code of Canon Law, Canon 116/1). It is for this reason that the necessity of economic goods must reminisce the purposes for which they ought to serve (PAUL VI, 1970).

Pope John Paul II, as supreme administrator of all the temporal goods of the Church, reaffirmed in his Apostolic Exhortation "A New Hope" for Lebanon (1997) that "the properties of the Church are a means for the apostolate, the social action, and services Christians are to accomplish, in a perspective of development and justice" (Frem, 2012, p. 136).

Accordingly, in order to carry out their mission in the world, religious congregations must use temporal goods according to their own rules and norms and by following the purpose they have defined for themselves. Each order or institute has pre-established codes to define the use and management of these properties. The next section outlines the biblical and social teaching of the Church, for managing ecclesiastical temporal goods.

3.2 *The biblical references and social teaching fundamentals of the management of Ecclesiastical Temporal goods*

According to the biblical foundations of the Church's vision of her temporal goods, man is perceived as the guardian of creation and not as the owner. So the whole message of the Bible is that God is always in favor of the poor and the oppressed. As for the teaching of the Church, it can be summed up in three concepts: justice, love and solidarity.

3.3 *Man is the guardian of Creation*

It is widely known that man is the guardian of creation and not the owner because the land does not belong to him (Cf. Gn. 1 and 2). It is a gift of God to man so that he can exploit it, profit from his goods and live from his production. But this production belongs to everyone and not to any particular person. In accordance to this, God asked Moses to establish a jubilee year to help those in need by sharing food and shelter (Cf. Lev. 25:8-13).

Moreover, in his encyclical *Sertum Laetitiae* (1939), Pope Pius XII declared that private property and financial wealth must be invested in favor of all men. Indeed, the property is a natural right, received from the Creator. As goods of the earth are created by God, they must be accessible to all in a fair and just way.

In the pastoral constitution on the church in the modern world, the Second Vatican Council reaffirmed this social doctrine by saying that the goods of the Earth are destined for all human beings. Indeed, God has destined the Earth for the use of all men, so the goods of creation must be equitably distributed in the hands of all, according to the rule of justice (Vatican Council, 1975).

3.4 *God reigns for the poor*

God challenges us in favor of the poor because, for Him, we must help and support them as well as the marginalized, the disabled, or others. His message is very clear in this sense because He sent us his son Jesus who affiliated Himself with the poor giving us a model of life. The Apostles relied on his teachings and way of life and lived a simple life dedicated to prayer and serving the most disadvantaged.

3.5 *Justice and charity*

The purpose of the social teaching of the Church is to study the human and social reality and to examine whether it conforms to the gospel or not. In this sense, it gives us the bases and foundations for the use and administration of temporal goods (John Paul II, 1987). It would tend to reduce economic and social inequalities in such a way that the goods of creation are divided among all while

respecting the rights of each.

Thus, the Church affirms that the socio-economic development should be aimed at the prosperity of humanity and peace in the world. From Leo XIII to John Paul II (Pope Leo XIII (encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, 1891), Pope Pius XII (encyclical *Sertum Laetitiae*, 1939), Pope John XXIII (encyclical *Pacem in terris*, 1963)), Vatican Council II (*Gaudium et spes*, 1965), Pope John Paul II (the encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, 1991)), they all considered at this social development in the same way, and agreed on the fact that the Church had to share her wealth with the needy as Saint Gregory of Nyssa said: "share with the poor whom God prefer. All belongs to God, our common Father. We all are brothers of the same family" (Frem, 2012, p. 137).

In order "to fulfill the requirements of justice and equity, every effort must be made to put an end as soon as possible to the immense economic inequalities which exist in the world and increase from day to day, linked with individual and social discrimination, provided, of course, that the rights of individuals and the character of each people are not disturbed" (Vatican Council II, 1975, p. 971).

It is undeniable that, in continuity with Vatican II, John Paul II had made social justice one of the themes that most often comes up in his teaching: "nor would a type of development which did not respect and promote human rights - personal and social, economic and political, including the rights of nations and of peoples - be really worthy of man." (John Paul II, 1987, par. 33).

3.6 Solidarity

John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) calls on the Church to stand in solidarity with the poor and to help them. For him, the consecrated people are the example of solidarity and their lives can be a model of this solidarity based on the love and spirit of the Beatitudes. John Paul II says: "love has been and remains the driving force of mission, and is also the sole criterion for judging what is to be done or not done, changed or not changed. It is the principle which must direct every action, and end to which that action must be directed" (John Paul II, 1990, par. 60). The goal is to work for a just and reconciled society.

3.7 The Legal foundations of the administration of ecclesiastical temporal goods of the Catholic Church

In Lebanon, the Catholic Church, the Apostolic See, Patriarchates, Metropolitans, Dioceses and Orders that have "juridic persons can acquire temporal goods by every just means permitted to others" (Article 1010 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO) in 1990, and article 1254 of the Code of Canon Law (CIC) in 1983).

The temporal ecclesiastical goods are governed by the Civil Laws; besides, they are governed by the Code of Personal Status of the Catholic Communities in Lebanon, and the CCEO, promulgated by his Holiness the Pope John Paul II, in 1990, and the Code of Canon Law.

According to the CCEO (From 18/10/1990) "The Roman Pontiff is the supreme administrator and steward of all ecclesiastical goods" (Canon 1008, par. 1), and "under the supreme authority of the Roman Pontiff, ownership of temporal goods of the Church belongs to that juridic person which has lawfully acquired them" (Canon 1008, par. 2).

On August 10, 1995, a letter was sent to all religious leaders declaring that His Holiness Pope John Paul II had renewed, as a precaution, the regulations of Pope Paul VI prohibiting the alienation of any property of a juridic person from the Eastern Churches without the express permission of the Holy See. In legal use, alienation is the transfer of property, whether by sale or donation or testament, etc. Failure to respect these rights renders the acts of selling null and void.

4. The Family

The second theoretical foundation is the family being the essential purpose of these housing projects.

According to Vatican II, the Catholic Church, above all, recognizes the family as "the beginning and basis of human society" (Vatican Council II, 1975, p. 778). It is the nucleus of the society in which man is born, grows, and lives. For this reason, without referring to its religious dimension, the Church will always defend the family. The Church refuses to separate the two social and ecclesiastical components of the family; one cannot exist without the other. The Vatican Council II, in the decree on the Apostolate of Lay People (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*), gives the most beautiful Church descriptions about the family: "first and vital cell of society" and "domestic sanctuary of the Church." Therefore, the family is the living testimony of the Church (Vatican Council II, 1975).

In February 1994, John Paul II, in his "Letter to Families", affirmed that God himself is present in the family and He continues His Creation in a very particular way in human paternity and motherhood. It certifies that parents are responsible for transmitting Christian values to children through the religious awakening they inculcate. It is through everyday life that the love of God and neighbor is transmitted. He adds that it is in the family that "the sincere gift of self" which is inseparable from the sacrament of marriage is lived. This gift is expressed in fidelity, in the transmission of life by which the child himself becomes a 'gift'. The child is an integral part of the life of a couple; he is the fruit of their love and therefore a mutual gift (John Paul II, 1994).

"A man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life and which is ordered by its nature to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring" (Code of Canon Law, canon 1055). The Church asks only for the intention of the married the opening to life, linked to the fourth pillar of the Christian marriage: the fecundity which "is a gift, an end of marriage, for conjugal love naturally tends to be fruitful. A child does not come from outside as something added on to the mutual love of the spouses, but springs from the very heart of that mutual giving, as its fruit and fulfillment." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1995, par. 2366).

To live together and to educate their children, the rights and duties inherent to the family are numerous. Parents must support their family members and ensure their place in society. It is for this reason that the various Lebanese Catholic institutions must support the families who are unable to fulfill their living duties. In that period and in accordance with the Special Assembly for Lebanon of the Synod of Bishops in 1995, the family life was unsettled due to the following reasons: one reason was the segregation of the family members due to the emigration of the father or one of its members in search of employment or training; an additional reason was the family life which was compromised by financial difficulties; one final reason was the misconception of spousal independence and a contraceptive mentality which leads to have an undermined family life" (Message de l'assemblée spéciale pour le Liban du synode des évêques, 1995).

In order to provide the necessary assistance in the face of the dangers threatening Lebanese families, the ecclesiastical institutions, according to the Special Assembly for Lebanon of the Synod of Bishops (1995), must ally themselves and create networks of economic aid and spiritual and moral support.

5. Right to Adequate Housing

The man and the woman constitute between them a community for the whole life, ordered by its nature for the good of the spouses as well as the generation and the education of the children as indicated canon 1055 of the Canon Law of the Catholic Church. They are entitled to adequate housing without which they cannot be ready to accept new life which is a primordial condition of the sacrament of marriage. This suitable dwelling is a right according to the Universal Right of Human Rights (1948) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966). The Church and the Institutes of Consecrated Life have tried to establish, on the one hand, the social doctrine of the Church and on the other hand the commandments of the Universal Right in the realization of housing projects. Their goal is to provide adequate housing for young people who want to marry, newlyweds, and disadvantaged families.

Thus, we will first go to the definition of "housing", then show the main aspects of the "right to

adequate housing" and after that, the obligations of States. Finally, we will talk about the right to housing in Lebanon. These notions are essential to understand the theme of housing in general and in Lebanon, in particular.

5.1 *Definition of housing by its different dimensions: architectural, social, emotional and economic*

According to Bonvalet, housing has the particularity of being at the crossroads of a multitude of social sciences, and it is a feasible and fruitful entry into family matters (Bonvalet, 1997). In our definition of housing, we will not deal with the various types of housing, but in its different dimensions namely architectural, social, emotional, economic, and political.

5.2 *Architectural dimension*

The first dimension is that of architectural dimension. "Housing is defined from the point of view of its use. It is a unit used as a dwelling which is:

- separate, which is to say completely enclosed by walls and partitions, without communicating with another unit unless this is by means of the shared parts of the building (corridor, staircase, lobby, etc.);
- self-contained, which is to say with an entrance from which there is direct access to the outside or to the shared parts of the building, without having to go through another unit" (Source: web site of the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies: <https://www.insee.fr/en/metadonnees/definition/c1702>)

5.3 *Social dimension*

In addition, housing, according to John-Paul Lacaze, is a "social sign" that provides data on the social status of an individual or a home (Seguin, 2009). It is a vital need for the human being without which he cannot live. A family needs a roof and a home to build the collective life. Owning a house or having an independent living space is a stepping stone for any individual to become involved in social engagement and establishing respectability. Homeless people are often misperceived by society because it is an indication that a person has not managed to acquire or achieve respectability (Seguin 2009). It is for this reason that several societies have, therefore, considered that housing is a natural right.

5.4 *Emotional dimension*

As a result, housing acquires an emotional dimension because of the memories attached to it. Indeed, the investment of an individual in the development strengthens the degree of attachment of this resident to his home. For this person, housing can be considered as a part of himself. For Seguin, the house becomes more than just a living space because it is the medium in which individuals establish and nurture their connections with each other (Seguin 2009). In particular, we speak of "family home" because each member adheres to own memories in this dwelling.

5.5 *Economic dimension*

Finally, housing is a major tool of regulation for national economic policy. Real estate is one of the main fields of activity of the building industry which is one of the major sectors of the national economy. The economic role of housing is constituted of both an object produced by an industrial and artisanal sector and a heritage held, managed and generated income (Driant, 2009). In fact, the acquisition of a dwelling in order to reserve it or to hand it down as inheritance to one's descendants remains a very common idea in Lebanon. It makes it possible to plan and develop a retirement home

that you share with your children or to guarantee a monthly income for the long term. Housing then has a heritage function because it can be passed down from generation to generation. Additionally, it is an element of supputations in the contexts of the real estate crises.

So housing is not just a place to live, a property or a home, just like a shelter. Housing has a strong social dimension, an affective dimension and an essential economic function. It is, therefore, a political issue because it is from this place that all the participation in the collective life, whether urban or rural, is played out. Several companies have even perceived it as a social right associated with the crucial societal integration. It is also essential for the survival of the person and the safeguarding of his identity and his freedom.

Hence, the deployment of this right to housing is not only a public responsibility in the Lebanese context, but it also challenges the ecclesiastical institutions, whatever the debates, worries and practical obstacles that may arise. And thus, the right of housing must be guaranteed and protected by the law as will be explained in the following sections.

5.6 Main aspects of the Right to Adequate Housing

The right to adequate housing, which secures the right to a healthy and secure habitat for each individual, has been recognized as a social right since the year 1946. It was recognized on a global scale in Article 25-1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Right issued on December 10th, 1948 as follows: “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, etc.” (source: <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights>). It was also consolidated with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1966 as an indispensable component of the adequate standards of living. There are numerous other documents and international agreements that have recognized the right of owning a dwelling as well as have provided some sort of legal protection to maintain the privacy of the inhabitants.

Thus, over the years, the international communities have also paid increase attention to the key aspects of the Right to adequate housing. According to the United Nations (UN) the right to adequate housing is the right to live in a place that guarantees security, peace and dignity. These characteristics are described mainly in the General Comments of Committee no 4 (1991), which deals with the right to adequate housing and no 7 (1997), which focuses on forced evictions (United Nations, 2010).

According to the United Nations (2010), the right to adequate housing includes first the freedom related to protection against forced evictions and the arbitrary destruction or demolition of one’s home; the right to arbitrary non-interference in one’s housing, his private life or his family; and finally, the right to choose his residence, or to decide where to live and to move freely.

In addition, the right to adequate housing covers a range of rights including security of tenure, and the restoration of housing, lands and properties. This set of right also includes equal and nondiscriminatory access to adequate housing as well as participation in housing decision as the community and national level.

In addition, adequate housing must have more than just an architectural dimension. It must meet certain criteria that, according to the United Nations, cover more than mere provision and accessibility. These criteria are summarized in seven points including *security of tenure*, which includes receiving legal protection against forced eviction, harassment and other threats; *the availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure* insuring that its occupants have safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, a source of energy and electricity, a place of storage for food and garbage disposal devices; *the affordability* which means the ability to pay the cost of the apartment should not threaten the exercise of the other fundamental necessities; *the habitability* that ensures the physical safety of the occupants and provides sufficient space and protection against cold, humidity, heat, rain, wind or other health and structural hazards; *the accessibility* that should take into consideration the needs of the disadvantaged and marginalized groups; *the location* which

ensures proximity to employment opportunities, health-care services, schools, childcare centers and the other social amenities, should not be threatened by pollution or other dangers; and finally, *the cultural adequacy* where the expression of the cultural identity of the occupants is respected and taken into account.

Finally, each state has certain obligations to take those above-mentioned criteria into consideration, and tries to enforce them into law.

5.7 *State obligations under international law*

As we have already pointed out in the section above, all housing must meet a minimum set of criteria and rights. International Right imposes these on all States. But we also know that each country has its own laws and its own management, which means, each state is committed to putting this right into practice in one way or another. Thus, certain measures, declarations or courts are erected in order to protect the owner and / or the tenant against any abuse or discrimination. Accordingly, the right to adequate housing must be accepted by all countries, in accordance to Human Rights. Also, each state should develop a national strategy or plan with specific policies and measures specific to that right. The latter could concretise access to this right and its enforcement for all classes of society, especially the most deprived of them, and in case of failure or gaps, provide for readjustment conditions. Therefore, according to the United Nations (2010), this right to adequate housing, must be based on three levels of additional obligations that are related to respect, protect and finally fulfill.

In the first place, arrangements must be put to ensure the right to meetings and the possibility of participation in decision-making at community or national level, knowing that everyone has the right to build their own housing according to his needs and his dreams. Thus, the state does not have to resort to evictions, and should respect the privacy of the home, and protect it from violations by third parties (developers or owners).

Secondly, residents must be protected by law against all forms of discrimination, harassment and denial of services. Thus, any violation of this right should be denounced to the authorities concerned. Therefore, whenever necessary, compensation must be offered to any aggrieved person; to put it differently, governments must enforce all these rights, granting legal security of tenure and providing compensation to the poor.

Finally, the United Nations insists that the effective implementation of this right, ensuring a peaceful and dignified life for all citizens, must be guaranteed. Housing must fulfill certain basic functions such as accessibility to public services and infrastructure, ease of payment and respect for the cultural identity. In times of natural or man-made disasters, the state is called upon to provide direct assistance and assistance to the affected populations.

In conclusion, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights insists that governments develop strategies to ensure the right of everyone to live in peace and dignity. As a result, this committee emphasizes the responsibility of the various actors. These can be individuals, NGOs or companies, and they may be from the international voluntary sector, such as the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), etc.

5.8 *Right to adequate housing in Lebanon*

For the first time in Lebanon, the so-called law of modernization of old rents on May 8, 2014 (amended on February 28, 2017) which liberalizes the old leases signed before July 23, 1992, brought out the notion of "Right to adequate housing" in the public debate. In fact, it raised the question of housing policy, as a whole. It is in this context that the non-governmental organization, Legal Agenda, worked with the Association of Lebanese Economists and the Public Works Studio Planning Department in order to promote the preparation of a draft law on the right to housing. The lawyer Nizar Saghieh, Executive Director of Legal Agenda, delivered to L'Orient-Le Jour (21/4/2015) his lines of reflection on a global policy in this area (Saghieh, 2015).

According to Saghieh, the right to housing does not exist in Lebanon. He defines the notion of "right to housing" as absent from Lebanese texts. It was mentioned for the first time in the recent decision of the Constitutional Council, when it ruled on the law of modernization of old rents. In their decision, the wise men refer to the right to housing as a fundamental right which cannot be denied. It is important to note that it does not only concern tenants of old leases. The poorest of citizens must of course be included in a comprehensive housing policy, including those whose income does not allow them to rent on the free market and those whose housing is considered unhealthy, unworthy or dangerous.

Still, according to Saghieh, the State must better regulate rents. Several solutions are available. One is based on rent management according to different criteria (region, surface, etc.). The public authorities could also decide to tax vacant dwellings. Yet, the most important reform would be to define the assistance capacities of the public authorities as regards the regulation of rents. Then, based on that, they can identify the categories of people to help. It makes no sense to only help tenants of old leases regardless of socio-economic criteria and to make no provision for others. There should also be a policy of social housing construction enacted by the State or municipalities.

6. Conclusion

This paper indicates that the affordable housing projects implemented by the Lebanese Maronite Order (LMO) is in conformity with its mission and the Catholic Church's one as well as with the Human Right to Appropriate Housing standards. Indeed, along with its socio-economic mission, the LMO through its 300th Celebration launched the non-benefit housing program for young couples. The Order based its program on a survey conducted by the Social Affair Office in monasteries of LMO all over Lebanon that took account of the needs of their communities, which resulted in prioritizing housing. The Order took the initiative to realize such housing projects under the Patronage of Saint Pope John-Paul II who encouraged such endeavors to aid the well-being of the Lebanese Christian communities. With such a program, the Order embodied the teaching of the Church as regards the ecclesiastical temporal goods, the protection of the family, and the implementation of the Rights to adequate housing in the hope that the Lebanese government entities can design policies, as well as make decisions and programs so as to ensure that the youth and vulnerable Lebanese families have access to safe, affordable and adequate housing.

Finally, this evaluative research affirms the consistency of these projects with the mission of LMO. These projects must be multiplied as Pope John Paul II mentioned in his Apostolic Exhortation for Lebanon in 1997.

Therefore, this study urges the Lebanese government to apply the Right to Adequate Housing in the Lebanese Law and encourage it as well as all governments in collaboration with the private sector and not-for profit organisations to deliver more housing projects to facilitate access to home ownership in the urban areas where a third of the dwellers worldwide have lack access to safe and secure housing.

This paper does not discuss the other findings emanating from this evaluative research such as the achievements of the project's objectives, confirming that owning an apartment encouraged young people to marry and establish a stable home, thus rooting the beneficiary owners in the country. These findings will be subject to future papers.

7. Funding

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