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### **Migrations: A Challenge for City Integration, Security and Quality of Life in the Mediterranean Area**

*Emigration, Transnational Family Networks, and Remittances:  
Overview of the Situation in Lebanon*

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**Title of paper** Emigration, Transnational Family Networks, and Remittances:  
Overview of the Situation in Lebanon

**Summary** This paper looks at the profile of the Lebanese emigration from 1975 to 2001 by education, destination, gender, age, profession, etc. It also presents information about Lebanese transnational family networks, as well as data pertaining to the volume of remittances received through formal channels and their macro and micro impact on Lebanon.

**Keywords** Lebanon, Lebanese, migration, remittances, transnational families, networks.

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# **Emigration, Transnational Family Networks, and Remittances: Overview of the Situation in Lebanon**

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

This paper<sup>1</sup> presents an overview of the current migration outflow and remittances inflow in Lebanon. It attempts to draw as realistic a picture as possible of the situation, with the hope that this information will lead to an increase in the body of research on both emigration and remittances to better understand the correlation between them and the impact of the one on the other for effective development policies. The paper will use data collected from significant, reliable, and accessible local and international sources.

Despite the fact that statistics available are based on sample studies because Lebanon has not had a census since 1932, and even though the data available on remittances is neither sufficient nor detailed, what exists suggests a pattern of an elevated outflow of young and educated Lebanese males, an increase in female migrants with a similar profile, an increase in the number of emigrants in the Muslim communities, and a sizable inflow of remittances that is significantly higher than both Foreign Directed Investment (FDI) and tourism receipts. Furthermore, what exists also suggests that transnational family network is a major factor in both processes -- emigration outflow and remittances inflow.

Most of what has been published about Lebanese emigration has been written from the perspective of the receiving countries.<sup>2</sup> Emigration did not receive appropriate attention from

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<sup>1</sup>This paper is a summary of work in progress undertaken by the author. There will be future papers building on the groundwork presented herein. The views expressed in the paper are only those of its independent author. The author wishes to thank Mr. Nassib Ghobril for permission to use his lecture, 'Expatriates' Remittances & the Lebanese Economy: Brain Drain or Economic Gain?' which he presented at the Lebanese Emigration Research Center, NDU, April 21, 2004, and Dr. Eugene Sensenig-Dabbous for his comments and insights.

<sup>2</sup>R. Khatlab, *Mahgar: Saga Libanese no Brasil: Sociologia Iconografica*, Lebanon: Mokhtarat, 2002; G. Lafleur, *Les Libanais et les Syriens de Guadeloupe*, Paris, France: Éditions Karthala, Saint-Claude, Guadeloupe: Phénicien, 1999; M. Diaz De Kuri and L. Macluf, *De Libano a Mexico: Crónica de un Pueblo Emigrante, México*, 1999; I. Klich and J. Lesser, *Arab and Jewish Immigrants in Latin America*, London: Frank Cass, 1998; A. Abdulkarim, *La Diaspora Libanaise en France: Processus Migratoire et*

the perspective of Lebanon until the end of the armed conflict (1975-1991), even though emigration had been an important Lebanese population dynamic since the second part of the nineteenth century. Emigration increased dramatically in the post-war era (1991-2001).<sup>3</sup> A recent survey showed that of these 900,000 emigrants, 54.4% left between 1975 and 1990, while 18.4% left between 1991 and 1995, and 26.6% left between 1996 and 2001, 0.7% were undetermined, making the total percentage of those left after the end of the war (18.4% + 26.6%= 47.0%) almost equal to those who left during the war, or 54.4%.<sup>4</sup> The majority of these emigrants, or 63.7%, were between the ages of 25 and 44. Of the 63.7%, 22.1% were female and 41.6% were male<sup>5</sup> and the greater numbers of these migrants were either university graduates (25.4%) or high school graduates (23.6%).<sup>6</sup>

Most emigrants from Lebanon were, until recently, from the Christian communities; however, the number of Muslim emigrants has been increasing, which indicates that the country's 'push' and the regional and international 'pull' factors are affecting all the communities in Lebanon regardless of creed<sup>7</sup> or geographic origin.<sup>8</sup> It should be noted here that

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*Économie*, L'Harmattan: Comprendre le Moyen-Orient, 1996; *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration*, edited by A. Hourani and N. Shehadi, London: Center for Lebanese Studies and Tauris, 1992; J. Obeid, *Siriolibanesa en la Republica Argentina*, Buenos Aires, 1987; P. Blatt, P. and T. Batrouney, *Settlement Problems of Lebanese in Melbourne: Migrant Settlement Council of Victoria*, Australia, 1982; D. Misra, 'The Lebanese in Nigeria 1890-1960,' Ph.D. thesis, University of Calabar, Nigeria, 1985; H. L. van der Laan, *The Lebanese Traders in Sierra Leone*, The Hague, 1975; 'The Antiochian Orthodox Syrians of Montreal, 1905-1980: An Historical Study of Cultural and Social Change Over Three Generations,' by Marino, Norman Joseph, M.A. thesis, Concordia University, 1994.

<sup>3</sup> There are no published studies measuring emigration from Lebanon after 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Ch. Kasparian, *L'Entrée des Jeunes Libanais dans la Vie Active et l'Émigration des Libanais depuis 1975*, Vol. III, Presses de l'Université Saint Joseph, 2003, p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Kasparian 2003, p. 45.

<sup>6</sup> Kasparian 2003, p. 57. See also 'The Migration of Lebanese Professionals to the US: Why They Left Lebanon and Why They Are Staying in the US,' by M. Fatfat, Ph.D. thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1998.

<sup>7</sup> 21% and 22.2% of the total 938,000 emigrants who emigrated between 1975 and 2001 were Shiite and Sunnis respectively in comparison to Armenian Orthodox and Greek Orthodox who formed 23.1% and 23.2% respectively, Anis Abi Farah, 'Al Mughtaribun bayna 1975 wa 2001' (The Lebanese Emigrants Between 1975 and 2001), *AsSafir* Newspaper, December 3, 2001, p. 6. For further information about the emigration of each of the religious groups in Lebanon see Information International, *Facts about Lebanese Emigration (1991-2000)*, Part II, November 2001, [[http://www.information-international.com/pdf/emigration\\_report\\_english-2.pdf](http://www.information-international.com/pdf/emigration_report_english-2.pdf)], Internet consulted on September 1, 2005. For information about the Armenians see H. Takooshian, 'Armenian Immigration to the United States from the Middle East', *Journal of Armenian Studies*, Special Issue on Identity and Assimilation: The Armenian Experience in America, Vol.3, Nos.1-2, 1986-87, pp.133-155; D. Papazian, 'Armenians In America'

very little information is available on the emigration of the Jewish community in Lebanon. Although, Judaism is a recognized religion in Lebanon, one of the 18 officially recognized confessions; very few Jews have remained in the country and of those even fewer publicly reveal their faith. In the 1950s Jews living in Beirut were “approximately 7,000 (...). As Jews in an Arab country, however, their position was never secure, and the majority left in 1967.”<sup>9</sup> When the 1975 war erupted in Lebanon, the Jewish Quarter in Beirut, as it was and still is known, was severely damaged, this, and the fact that in April of 1985 Hizbollah kidnapped and killed four prominent Jews from Beirut, led to the final exodus of the remaining Jews from Lebanon to the United States, Canada, and Europe.<sup>10</sup> In 2004, during the municipal elections in Beirut, only one Jew voted out of the 5,000 registered Jewish citizens.<sup>11</sup> Due to this reality, Lebanese Jewish emigrants have very little if any networks (including remittances) with the country as a whole. They however may be sending money to elderly relatives who have been left behind.<sup>12</sup>

Lebanese emigrants are culturally prone to assist their fellow family members and kin. This cultural value has helped create transnational family networks. The extended family,

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[<http://www.umd.umich.edu/dept/armenian/papazian/america.html>], Internet consulted January 9, 2006, this article appeared in the *Het Christelijk Oosten* 52, No. 3-4 (2000), pp. 311-347; V. Talai, ‘Social Boundaries Within and Between Ethnic Groups: Armenians in London,’ *Man*, Vol. 21, No.2, June 1986, pp. 251-270. For information about the Shi’a see ‘Constructing Lebanese Shi’ite Nationalism: Transnationalism, Shi’ism, and the Lebanese State,’ by R. Shaery-Eisenlohr, Ph.D. thesis, The University of Chicago, 2005; Ch. Bierwirth, ‘The Lebanese Communities of Côte d’Ivoire,’ *African Affairs*, Vol. 98, No. 390, January 1999, pp. 79-99; B. Winder, ‘The Lebanese in West Africa,’ *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 4, No. 3, April 1962, pp. 296-333; D. Georgakas, ‘Arab Workers in Detroit,’ *MERIP Reports*, No. 34, January 1975, pp. 1317. For information about the Druze migration see N. Richani, ‘The Druze of Mount Lebanon: Class Formation in A Civil War,’ *Middle East Report*, No. 162, Lebanon’s War, January 1990, pp. 26-30; K. Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, Leiden, Brill, 1992. For information on the Christian Lebanese communities see: G. Labaki, *The Maronites in the United States*, NDU Press, 1993; *St. George Cathedral and its People: Past, Present, and Future*, edited by Emil Dan and Nicolas Mansour, Publication Double Bay, N.S.W.: Longueville Media, 2004.

8 Abi Farah, 2001, p. 6.

9 M. Bard, ‘The Jews of Lebanon,’ *Jewish Virtual Library*, 2005, [<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/anti-semitism/lebjews.html>]. See also A. Aharoni, ‘The Forced Migration of Jews from Arab Countries’, [<http://www.iflac.com/ada/The%20Forced%20Migration%20of%20Jews%20from%20Arab%20Countries.htm>], Internet consulted on September 10, 2005.

10 *Ibid.*

11 M. Hatoum, ‘Of 5,000 Jewish Lebanese, only 1 Voted,’ *The Daily Star*, May 10, 2004, [[http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition\\_ID=1&article\\_ID=3408&categ\\_id=2](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_ID=1&article_ID=3408&categ_id=2)], Internet consulted on September 10, 2005.

12 *Ibid.*

including parents, siblings, maternal and paternal grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, is the basic institution of Lebanese society and the main support to which family members and kin turn for assistance. It is the main source of networks for social, economic, and political survival of the individual and the clan.

These networks were and continue to be vital in linking Lebanese residents with their transnational emigrants and *vice versa*. These networks help in sponsoring new emigrants and in facilitating their lives in the receiving countries. They are also responsible, in the case of Lebanon, for much of the prosperity of the tourist industry through their repetitive visits. However, the most valuable output of these networks is the immense monetary transfer that the emigrants send to their families in Lebanon.

Remittances not only play a vital role in the lives of the recipients' household members, but also play an indispensable role in keeping the economy of the country afloat. Remittance inflow from Lebanese expatriates was estimated to have been \$1.2 billion in 1998, \$1.6 billion in 2000, \$2.5 billion in 2002, and \$2.7 billion in 2004.<sup>13</sup> Lebanon's main hard currency income earner is from tourism; however in 2001; remittances were 275 times the tourism and 924 times the FDI receipts.<sup>14</sup> The tourism industry continued its impressive growth in revenue terms, with 33 percent growth in tourist arrivals and the highest average per tourist expenditures (US\$ 1,500) in the Middle East. Tourism revenues represent the second largest source of foreign exchange earnings, coming after workers' remittances.<sup>15</sup>

Information on emigration from Lebanon for the period extending between 1975 and 2001 is drawn from several surveys based on sample studies conducted by St. Joseph's

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13 The World Bank, 'Annex: Recent Trends in Workers' Remittances to Developing Countries,' in *Global Development Finance: Mobilizing Finance and Managing Vulnerability*, 2005, p. 28. Figures for 2004 are estimated.

14 'Expatriates' Remittances Have Become Key to the Lebanese Economy, Averaging \$1.63bn Yearly, Reaching Nearly 14% of GDP in 2001 and Growing Faster than other Sources of Foreign Currency', *Saradar Weekly Monitor*, Issue 15, March 31-April 5, 2003, p. 9.

15 *World Investment News (WinNe)*, Expanding Economic Opportunities in Lebanon, November 2004, [<http://www.winne.com/mena/lebanon/report/2004/cprofiles/sri.php>], Internet consulted on December 20, 2005.

University in 2001,<sup>16</sup> by Anis Abi Farah, professor of Statistics at the Lebanese University in 2001,<sup>17</sup> by Information International in 2001,<sup>18</sup> by the Central Administration for Statistics in 1997,<sup>19</sup> and by the Ministry of Social Affaires in 1996.<sup>20</sup>

Information on transnational Lebanese emigrants' family networks is mainly drawn from the works of F. Khuri 'Kinship, Emigration, and Partnership among the Lebanese of West Africa',<sup>21</sup> A. Peleikis, *Lebanese in Motion: Gender and the Making of a Transnational Village*,<sup>22</sup> N. Jabbra and J. Jabbra, 'Kinship and Transnational Links in the Lebanese Diaspora',<sup>23</sup> and T. Batrouney, 'Australian-Lebanese: Return Visits to Lebanon and Issues of Identity'.<sup>24</sup>

Information on inflow of Lebanese expatriates' remittances is assembled from several sources, among them *Balance of Payments Statistics Yearbook*,<sup>25</sup> World Bank *Global Development Finance 2005*,<sup>26</sup> "Remittances and Microfinance in MENA..." by Carlos Silva-Jauregui,<sup>27</sup> "Workers' Remittances: An Important and Stable Source of External Development

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16 Kasparian, 2003.

17 Abi Farah, 2001, p. 6.

18 Information International, 2001,

[[http://www.information-international.com/pdf/emigration\\_report\\_english-1.pdf](http://www.information-international.com/pdf/emigration_report_english-1.pdf)] and [[http://www.information-international.com/pdf/emigration\\_report\\_english-2.pdf](http://www.information-international.com/pdf/emigration_report_english-2.pdf)], Internet consulted on September 1, 2005.

19 Administration Centrale de la Statistique, *Les Conditions de Vie des Ménages*, Liban, 1997.

20 Ministère des Affaires Sociales, *Les Logements et la Population*, Liban, 1996.

21 F. Khuri, 'Kinship, Emigration, and Partnership among the Lebanese of West Africa', *Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 35, No. 4, October 1965, 385-395.

22 A. Peleikis, *Lebanese in Motion: Gender and the Making of a Translocal Village*, New Brunswick, USA and London, UK: Transaction Publishers, 2003.

23 N. Jabbra and J. Jabbra, 'Kinship and Transnational Links in the Lebanese Diaspora,' in *Lebanese Diaspora: History Racism and Belonging*, edited by P. Tabar, Lebanese American University, 2005, pp. 275-290.

24 T. Batrouney, 'Australian-Lebanese: Return Visits to Lebanon and Issues of Identity', in *Lebanese Diaspora: History Racism and Belonging*, edited by P. Tabar, Lebanese American University, 2005, pp. 291-318.

25 International Monetary Fund, *Balance of Payments Statistics Yearbook*, Washington, D.C., 2002.

26 The World Bank, *Global Development Finance*, 2005.

27 C. Silva-Jauregui 'Remittances and Microfinance in MENA: Second Largest Source of External Funding in the World as Development Tool', *Microfinance Matters*, July 2005, [[http://www.uncdf.org/english/microfinance/newsletter/pages/2005\\_07/news\\_remittances.php](http://www.uncdf.org/english/microfinance/newsletter/pages/2005_07/news_remittances.php)], Internet consulted on September 15, 2005.

Finance” by Dilip Ratha,<sup>28</sup> “Expatriates’ Remittances & the Lebanese Economy: Brain Drain or Economic Gain?” by Nassib Ghobril,<sup>29</sup> “Why Should We Care About Worker’s Remittances?....,” by Dilip Ratha.<sup>30</sup>

This paper draws on secondary material on emigration and amasses data on remittances buried in rich but fragmentary reports and studies. It looks at the profile of the Lebanese emigration from 1975 to 2001 by education, destination, gender, age, profession, etc. It also presents information about transnational Lebanese migrant families, as well as data pertaining to the volume of remittances received through formal channels and their macro and micro impact on Lebanon.

## **B. LEBANESE TRANSNATIONAL EMIGRATION**

Emigration from Lebanon is not a recent phenomenon; it ebbs and flows depending on the socio-political and economic environment in the country and the MENA region. In the late decades of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth, Lebanese emigration was part of a global movement of people.<sup>31</sup> Between the two World Wars, it was a consequence of the calamities that devastated Lebanon in the form of famine, epidemics, and economic disasters, and after the Second War it was caused by the layoffs resulting from the retreat of the British and French troops from Lebanon.<sup>32</sup> Emigration then ceased when Lebanon enjoyed a fair level of political stability and impressive economic prosperity from the late fifties until the beginning of

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28 D. Ratha, ‘Workers’ Remittances: An Important and Stable Source of External Development Finance’, in *Global Development Finance*, Chapter 7, 2003, [<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTRGDF/Resources/GDF2003-Chapter7.pdf>], Internet consulted on September 15, 2005.

29 N. Ghobril, ‘Expatriates’ Remittances & the Lebanese Economy: Brain Drain or Economic Gain?’ Lecture presented at the Lebanese Emigration Research Center, NDU, April 21, 2004.

30 D. Ratha, ‘Why Should We Care About Worker’s Remittances? And What Should We Do’, Note presented by Ratha, a senior economist with the World Bank in Washington, DC and an expert on migrant remittances at the Expert Meeting of the Global Commission on International Migration, Geneva, January 20-21, 2004, [<http://www.adb.org/PrivateSector/Finance/worker-remittances.pdf>], Internet consulted January 20, 2006.

31 R. Owen, ‘Lebanese Migration in the Context of World Population Movements’, *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration*, edited by A. Hourani and N. Shehadi, London: Center for Lebanese Studies and Tauris, 1992, pp 33-39.

32 E. Safa, *L’émigration Libanaise*, Université St.-Joseph, Beyrouth, 1960.

the 1975 war. However, during this era, i.e., 1950s-1975, a temporary emigration was set in motion, lured by the booming economies of the oil-exporting Gulf countries and their increased need for skills in all sectors.<sup>33</sup>

Lebanese emigration was rekindled with the succession of wars between the years 1975 and 1991 and has picked up momentum with the instability of the country following the cessation of the armed conflict in 1991. The total number of emigrants for the whole period is estimated to have been over nine hundred thousand.<sup>34</sup> It should be noted here that Lebanon does not have any restriction on individual mobility except for young man who have not done their military service. Lebanon also permits dual nationality.

In 1975 Lebanon was plunged into a war that lasted till 1991, when it ended with a new reconciliation accord known as the Taëf Agreement. Two years after the agreement, a reconstruction plan was ushered in led by a Lebanese-Saudi business tycoon, the late Rafick Hariri, as Prime Minister with special prerogatives. Hariri embarked on an extensive and costly reconstruction plan mainly of Beirut Central Business District. Lebanon's economy and infrastructure were devastated by the war; however its gold reserve (9 million ounces), its banking structure, and its freedom of exchange and trade were almost intact. Dollar cartels, among other factors, caused the severe fall of the Lebanese pound's purchasing power, leading to economic hardship of the middle and lower income classes of Lebanese.<sup>35</sup> Following the inauguration of the reconstruction plan, despite the fact that Lebanon experienced a 7% and 8% growth rate for 1993 and 1994 respectively, the country's growth continued to decline plummeting to 0.0% in 2000.<sup>36</sup>

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33 B. Labaki, 'Lebanese Emigration during the War (1975-1989), The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration', edited by A. Hourani and N. Shehadi, London: Center for Lebanese Studies and Tauris, 1992, pp. 505-526.

34 Abi Farah 2001, p. 6.

35 Georges Corm, 'La Situation Économique du Liban et ses Perspectives de Développement dans la Région', *Quaderns de la Mediteranea*, Barcelone, [http://georgescorm.com/fr/articles/articledetail/article10.shtml], Internet consulted on September 8, 2005.

36 Adib Nehmeh, 'The Disappointing 'Growth' Decade', Social Watch, pp. 12-127, [http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/APCITY/UNPAN003491.pdf], Internet consulted on September 12, 2005.

With this grim economic and security situation, Lebanese were opting to leave. The number of Lebanese migrants who fled the country between 1975 and 2001 is estimated to have been over 900,000. Their profiles, origins, destinations, etc. differed from Lebanese migration of the 1800s and early 1900s, as well as from the migration of the oil-boom during the fifties and sixties.

The destination of the Lebanese emigrants has not changed much. Kasparian found that North America absorbed 29.5% of those who left between 1975 and 1990, Western Europe 24.4%, the Arab countries 20.4%, Australia 13.1%, Africa 6.3%, Central and South America 4.3%, Eastern Europe 1.4%, Asia 0.4%, and undetermined 0.1%.<sup>37</sup>

In the early periods, Lebanese emigrants were in their majority artisans, skilled laborers, peasants, and small landowners.<sup>38</sup> In the fifties, sixties and seventies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they were mainly teachers, technicians, craftsman, and building contractors heading mainly to the oil economies of the Gulf countries. At the beginning of the 1975 war they were primarily engineers, businessmen, medical specialists, bankers, craftsmen, and qualified manpower,<sup>39</sup> and since the 1990s have been increasingly the young and educated.<sup>40</sup>

Most of the Lebanese emigrants are educated. Abi Farah's survey showed that 29.2% of the total emigrants were university graduates (273,694), 3.4% (31,887) were technicians and 18.4% (172,720) were high school graduates, of whom 42.7%, 33.3%, and 52.3% respectively were women. Kasparian's survey revealed that most of the migrants were either university graduates (25.4%) or high school graduates (23.6%).<sup>41</sup>

The overwhelming majority of these migrants, according to Abi Farah, were between the ages of 20-34 (28.4% or 265,722) and 35-49 (28.1% or 263,065),<sup>42</sup> while Kasparian's study

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37 Kasparian, 2003, p. 14.

38 A. Naff, *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience*, Southern Illinois University Press, 1985, pp. 112-113.

39 Labaki 1992, p. 613.

40 Abi Farah 2001, p. 6.

41 Kasparian 2003, p. 57.

42 Abi Farah 2001, p. 6.

showed that the majority, or 63.7% of the total number of emigrants, were between the ages of 25 and 44.<sup>43</sup>

The representation of the sexes in the Lebanese emigration is changing as well; while the majority of early emigrants were male, Abi Farah showed that increasingly the proportion of women emigrants is now not much behind that of their male counterparts, counting for 51% of the age group 20-34 and 42.4% of those aged 35-49.<sup>44</sup>

Today more than ever, Lebanese emigration reflects the sectarian and ethnic composition of the population in Lebanon.<sup>45</sup> While at the onset of the 1975 war Lebanese emigration was overwhelmingly Christian, as the war progressed migration from the Muslim communities was increasing.<sup>46</sup> Between 1975 and 2001, 23.2% of the total number of the Greek Orthodox community emigrated, making this community the largest exporter of emigrants, followed by the Armenian Orthodox and the Greek Catholics 23.1% each, the Sunnis 22.2%, the Shiites 21%, and the Maronites 20.9%. The Druze were the community to have emigrated least during this period, with 14.7%.<sup>47</sup>

Emigration also affected all of the geographical parts of Lebanon. Abi Farah found that 22.2% of the Lebanese living in the North emigrated between 1975 and 2001, compared to 19.6% of those dwelling in Beirut, 19.3% of those inhabiting the South, 17.3% of those living in Mount Lebanon and 16.0% of those residing in the Bekaa.<sup>48</sup>

In her 2003 survey, Kasparian uncovered that, of the 900,000 emigrants who left between 1975 and 2001, 41.3% cited unemployment as the main reason for emigrating and 21.1%

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43 Kasparian 2003, p. 45.

44 Abi Farah 2001, p. 6.

45 Lebanon is a small country with a current resident population estimated at 4,005,000 in 1997. Ch. Kasparian, 'Liban: Démographie et Économie des Migrations', in *Migrations Méditerranéennes Rapport* 2005, edited by Philippe Fargues, CARIM, Robert Shuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, 2005, p.176.

46 Labaki, 1992, p. 623.

47 Abi Farah 2001, p. 6.

48 *Ibid.*, 2001, p. 6.

claimed family reunion as the reason, while 17.1% attributed their exodus to the general situation and 10.9% to the economic situation, while only 5.3% said it was the war.<sup>49</sup>

The exodus has not decreased since the end of the war; in fact, in its survey, Information International showed that in 2001 Lebanese continued to seek to emigrate: 6.7% or 232,000 persons have applied for visas “60.7% as emigrants, 18.9% as workers, 11.3% as tourists and 9.1% as students.<sup>50</sup> Of the 232,000 applicants 16.7% were between the ages of 20-24, 43.2% between the ages of 25-29, 12% of the age group 30-34, 6% of the age group 35-39, and 8% of those of the age group 40-44.<sup>51</sup>

The survey also revealed that those who are emigrating are the highly educated or skilled: “21.7% of the applicants are professionals (other than lawyers, engineers, and physicians) and 13.3% are in business management and marketing, while 12.8% are engineers, 9.9% administrators, 8.9% computer scientists, 7.9% students, 5.9% merchants, 4.9% lawyers, 3% self-employed, 2.5% physicians and pharmacists and 9.2% other professions.”<sup>52</sup>

### **C. TRANSNATIONAL FAMILY NETWORKS AND REMITTANCES**

Family is the basic institution in Lebanese society and the main refuge for its members. Lebanese turn first to their family for assistance in almost every aspect of their lives including that of emigration. Parents as family are important in Lebanese society both at home and abroad; however “what is of real significance is the joint family, a larger family group consisting of the parents, their children, the paternal grandparents, the paternal uncles and their families, and unmarried paternal aunts, and the kinship group, the largest family group, consisting of all those that claim descent from the same paternal ancestor. The individual learns to identify himself with this family group from the moment of birth (...)”<sup>53</sup>

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49 Kasparian, 2003, p. 19.

50 Information International, Part II, 2001, p. 16.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

53 A. Tannous, ‘Group behavior in the Village Community of Lebanon’, *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 48, No. 2, September 1942, pp. 232.

Even in urban settings, kinship has remained strong, for “local Arab culture in Camp Trad,<sup>54</sup> reinforced by political and economic realities, valorized the patriarchal family, the primacy of the family over the person, the family of origin over the family of procreation.”<sup>55</sup> This kinship is nurtured “to produce persons linked to, responsible to, and prioritizing families. Connectivity reinforced family solidarity where solidarity was necessary for social, economic, and political survival.”<sup>56</sup>

These networks have played and continue to play a significant role in linking Lebanese residents with their transnational emigrants and *vice versa*. Lebanese transnational family networks do not differ in their logic and structure from that of the Lebanese family national networks, which are mainly built and developed in the family realm and in the home village, or town or metropolitan neighbourhood. These networks are developed locally and then transferred transnationally at need and under specific conditions.<sup>57</sup>

The first Lebanese emigrants who migrated and then settled in the host countries initiated these networks and were instrumental in creating the families’ transnational fields. Lebanese emigrants “continued to cherish family honour and solidarity. In return for loyalty, the family provided its members with protection and a sense of identity. Lebanese values centered on pride in one’s family name and ancestry (...).”<sup>58</sup> These networks take different forms, economic,

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54 Camp Trad is an urban working class neighborhood in Greater Beirut in Lebanon. S. Joseph, ‘Connectivity and Patriarchy among Urban Working Class Families in Lebanon’, *Ethos*, 1993, Vol. 21, No. 4, p. 452.

55 Joseph, 1993, p. 478-479. See also N. Jabbara and J. Jabbara, ‘Kinship and Transnational Links in the Lebanese Diaspora’, in *Lebanese Diaspora: History Racism and Belonging*, edited by P. Tabar, Lebanese American University, 2005, 275-290.

56 *Ibid.*, 1993, p. 479. See also M. Dorai, ‘Palestinian Emigration from Lebanon to Northern Europe: Refugees, Networks, and Transnational Practices’, *Refuge*, Vol. 21, No. 2, February 2003, pp.23-31.

57 F. Khuri, ‘Kinship, Emigration, and Partnership among the Lebanese of West Africa’, *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 35, No. 4, October 1965, 385-395; Patricia Nabti, ‘International Emigration from a Lebanese Village: Bishmizzinis on Six Continents’, Ph.D. thesis, Berkeley: University of Californian, 1989.

58 A. Naff, ‘Lebanese Immigration to the United States: 1880- to the Present’, in *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration*, edited by A. Hourani and N. Shehadi, London: Center for Lebanese Studies and Tauris, 1992, p.149. See also M. Humphrey, ‘Lebanese Identities: Between Cities, Nations and Trans-nations’, in *Lebanese Diaspora: History, Racism, and Belonging*, edited by P. Tabar, Lebanese American University, 2005, pp. 31-54; A. Fuller, *Buairij: Portrait of a Lebanese Muslim Village*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966; Jabbara and Jabbara, 2005.

socio-cultural, religious, political, etc.<sup>59</sup> They are manifested not only through sending remittances to their families and kin left behind, which is the form we are dealing with in this paper, but also in the migrants' involvement in visiting their homeland, in national, and international associations, etc. Transnational migrants in the twenty-first century have the opportunity to organize themselves to enhance their lives in their host countries, while continuing to address social and political issues related to their countries of origin. As Peggy Levitt put it, "transnational migrants work, pray, and express their political interests in several contexts rather than in a single nation-state. Some will put down roots in a host country, maintain strong homeland ties, and belong to religious and political movements that span the globe."<sup>60</sup>

Although, very little has been done to study family networks among Lebanese emigrants, the information scattered in different available publications and gathered from personal observations allows us to note that immigrant-resident networks can be seen through the emigrants' investments made in the village's spatial development and improvement, in the inflow of remittances and in charity contributions,<sup>61</sup> in seeking the home village to conduct religious services and ceremonies,<sup>62</sup> in returning to the home country for visits,<sup>63</sup> in

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59 G. Hourani and E. Sensenig-Dabbous, 'Transnational Lebanese Communities Network: Using Traditional, Alternative and ICT-Based Methodologies to Study Middle Eastern Migration Networks', Sixth Mediterranean Social and Political Research Meeting, Montecatini Terme, 16 – 20 Mar. 2005; European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, Mediterranean Programme.  
60 P. Levitt, 'Transnational Migrants: When "Home" Means More Than One Country', Migration Information Source, October 1, 2004 [http://www.migrationinformation.org/USfocus/display.cfm?ID=261], Internet consulted on January 26, 2005.

61 M. Leichtman, 'Reexamining the Transnational Migrant: The Afro-Libanais of Senegal', in *Lebanese Diaspora: History Racism and Belonging*, edited by P. Tabar, Lebanese American University, 2005, pp. 153. See also S. Hanafi, 'Palestinian Diaspora Contribution to Investment and Philanthropy in Palestine', 2000, [www.palesta.net/academic/publication/diaspora.htm], Internet consulted on January 21, 2005 and J. Opiniano, 'The Dynamics of Transnational Philanthropy by Migrant Workers to their Communities of Origin: The Case of Pozorrubio, Philippines', Fifth International Society for Third-Sector Research (ISTR), International Conference, July 10, 2002, University of Cape Town, South Africa.

62 A. Peleikis, 'the Emergence of Tanslocal Community the Case of a South Lebanese Village and its Migrant Connections to Ivory Coast', *Cahiers d'Études sur la Méditerranée Orientale et le Monde Turco-Iranien*, No 30, Juin-Décembre 2000, pp. 313-314; A. Peleikis, *Lebanese in Motion: Gender and the Making of a Translocal Village*, New Brunswick, USA and London, UK: Transaction Publishers, 2003; U. Bacas, 'Cross-Border Marriages and the Formation of Transnational Families: A case Study of Greek-German Couples in Athens', Paper to the ESRC Transnational Communities Programme Seminar, Faculty of Anthropology and Geography, University of Oxford, WTPC October 2002,

communicating using the telephone, Internet and electronic mail,<sup>64</sup> and in becoming subscribers to satellite and TV channels and various media vehicles.<sup>65</sup>

Migrants also assist their country and people in times of need during wars, natural calamities and epidemics. Lebanese emigrants did not forsake their countrymen in Lebanon during the First World War, the Second World War and throughout the last war of 1975-1991. Emigrant communities as well as individuals sent relief contributions in both money and kind.<sup>66</sup>

Furthermore, these transnational family networks also help, among other things, in maintaining the outflow of emigrants, they facilitate their arrival, adjustment, settlement, employment,<sup>67</sup> they smooth legal processes in the host country, they provide funds for the migration process, and they provide information about the country of destination.<sup>68</sup>

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[<http://www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk/working%20papers/WPTC-02-10%20Bacas.pdf>], Internet consulted January 18, 2005.

63 T. Batrouney, 'Australian-Lebanese: Return Visits to Lebanon And Issues of Identity', in *Lebanese Diaspora: History Racism and Belonging*, edited by P. Tabar, Lebanese American University, 2005, pp. 300-303.

64 Peleikis, 2000, pp. 308-309; Peleikis, 2003, pp. 96-101; D. Diminescu, 'L'Usage du Téléphone Portable par les Migrants en Situation Précaire, Rapport de Recherche', Paris, ACI-Villes, CNRS, 2004, [[http://membres.lycos.fr/crisseries/saint-laurent4/Dana\\_Diminescu.doc](http://membres.lycos.fr/crisseries/saint-laurent4/Dana_Diminescu.doc)], and B. Wellman, and B. Hogan. 'The Internet in Everyday Life', [[http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/~wellman/publications/inet\\_everyday/inet\\_everyday.pdf](http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/~wellman/publications/inet_everyday/inet_everyday.pdf)], Internet consulted on January 22, 2005.

65 Peleikis, 2000, p. 310, 315; H. Amin, and D. Boyd, 'The Development of Direct Broadcast Television to and Within the Middle East', *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, 18, 2, 1994, pp.37-50; L. Cainkar, 'No Longer Invisible: Arab and Muslim Exclusion After September 11,' *MERIP*, No. 224, Fall 2002, [[http://www.merip.org/mer/mer224/224\\_cainkar.html](http://www.merip.org/mer/mer224/224_cainkar.html)], Internet consulted on December 21, 2005; J. Berger, 'Immigrants get a touch of home on TV', *International Herald Tribune*, The IHT Online, Monday, February 23, 2004, [<http://www.iht.com/articles/130747.html>], Internet consulted on January 29, 2005.

66 Hourani & Shehadi 1992; R. Karam, *Le Paris Libanais*, n.p., 2004; Ph. Kayal, and J. Kayal, *The Syrian-Lebanese in America A Study in Religion and Assimilation*, T. Wayne Publishers, Boston, 1975.

67 Khuri, 1965; Hourani, 1992.

68 Khuri, 1965; Bierwirth, 1999; Sh. Abu-Laban, 'Arab-Canadian Family Life,' in *An Olive Branch on the Family Tree: The Arabs in Canada*, by Baha Abu-Laban, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1980, pp. 158-180.

Transnational family networks and kinship relations have been instrumental in creating what is known as ‘chain migration’.<sup>69</sup> Emigrants were sponsored by their immigrant relatives during their emigration process, and were provided not only with money to travel but also with jobs and housing upon arrival in the country of destination.<sup>70</sup> Chain migration grew as the immigrants gained knowledge of the host country and as their businesses grew or their financial situation was improved. In this regard, Michael Suleiman noted that “After the feasibility and profitability of immigration to the United States and to America in general were well established, chain migration became the norm, with immigrants making it possible for the ambitious and the disgruntled in the old homeland to seek newer horizons. Those wanting to escape military service in the Ottoman army and those craving freedom from oppression and the liberty to speak and publish without censorship or reprisal left their homeland quickly and stealthily and sought what they thought would be a temporary refuge in America.”<sup>71</sup>

Chain migration was rekindled during the 1975-1991 war and in the post-war era. In her 2003 survey, Kasparian found that 21% of those who had migrated between 1975 and 2001 gave family reunion as a reason for their emigration; this was the second highest reason, following employment, with 41.3%.<sup>72</sup>

Facilitated by vast technological development, communication between resident and transmigrant members of families and between friends and relatives has increased, hence multiplying the flows of information, of resources (monetary and in-kind), and of migrants.<sup>73</sup>

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69 Khuri, 1965; Naff, 1985; Nabti, 1989. See also ‘The Effects of International Migration on a Northern Lebanese Village’, by L. Dibb Wigle, Ph.D. thesis, Detroit: Wayne State University, 1974; ‘Hadchite: A Study of Emigration in a Lebanese Village’, by R. K. Lewis, Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1967; ‘Lebanese Emigrants in West Africa: Their Effect on Lebanon and West Africa’, by M. Hanna, Ph.D. University of Oxford, 1959; R. Khatlab, *Lebanese Migrants in Brazil: An Annotated Bibliography*, Lebanese Emigration Research Center, NDU Press, 2005.

70 Humphrey, 2005 and Khuri, 1965. See also R. Tortello, ‘Out of Many Cultures The People Who Came: The Arrival Of The Lebanese’, (to Jamaica), [<http://www.jamaicagleaner.com/pages/history/story0056.htm>], Internet consulted on December 21, 2005.

71 M. Suleiman, ‘Introduction: The Arab Immigrant Experience’, in *Arabs in America*, Temple University Press, 1999, p. 3.

72 Kasparian, 2003, p. 21; Batrouney, 2005: 303-306.

73 Fatfat, 1998, pp.99-105. See also P. Levitt, ‘Toward an understanding of Transnational Community: Forms and Their Impact on Immigrant Incorporation’, Harvard University: Paper Presented at

Transnational support from immigrants is not limited to remittances; it also includes commodities such as clothes, consumer durables, medicines, etc. In her recent publication, A. Peleikis found that “(...) goods move along with people travelling back and forth between Lebanon and West Africa. When someone plans a visit home to Lebanon or travels to Africa, he or she is expected to inform relatives and friends of the trip. It is anticipated that the traveller will carry letters, tape-recorded messages and photographs to the family abroad as well as gifts of all shapes and sizes. On the return journey, the same traveller will be laden with goods coming from the other direction (...) migrants take back colourful patchwork trousers and African dresses, tropical fruit and cheap Atlantic fish to Lebanon.”<sup>74</sup>

Transnational migrants also contribute to tourism receipts through their family visits or tourist vacations. Most of the visitors who come to Lebanon are expatriates visiting their families and foreigners who are descendants of Lebanese emigrants. The hundreds of thousands of Lebanese expatriates who return each summer or during religious holidays give an important boost to the local economy, even though many of them stay with family and friends.<sup>75</sup>

Batrouney found that both the Lebanese-born and the Australian-born of Lebanese descent have been returning to Lebanon for visits either for business, or to visit family and/or friends, or for holidays. He further noted, “The proliferation of Lebanese and other Middle Eastern travel agents bears witness to the size and significance of return visits to Lebanon.”<sup>76</sup>

The total number of tourists who visited Lebanon in 2003 reached one million one hundred thousand. Statistics available do not differentiate expatriates from tourists and many Lebanese expatriates hold more than one citizenship and travel using foreign passports, hence it is difficult to identify the total number of visiting expatriates.<sup>77</sup>

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‘Comparative Immigration and Integration Program’, Winter Workshop University of California at San Diego, 19 February, 1999, [<http://migration.ucdavis.edu/cmpr/feb00/Levitt.html>], January 26, 2005.

<sup>74</sup> Peleikis, 2000, pp. 305-310; see also Peleikis, 2003, pp.93-96.

<sup>75</sup> Hourani and Sensenig-Dabbous, 2004, p. 16.

<sup>76</sup> Batrouney, 2005, p. 300.

<sup>77</sup> Tourism Trends in Mediterranean Countries, European Commission, Theme 4 Industry, Trade and Services, EU, 2001.

Lebanese expatriates living abroad contribute in the provision of housing for their family, relatives, and in some cases also friends. For example, Lebanese may give their immediate family members or relatives or friends the use of their houses/apartments. They sometimes invest in real-estate to help their family members obtain a roof over their heads.<sup>78</sup>

There are other forms of mutual support between families living in Lebanon and those living abroad. One such form can be the care of a child who is going to school or university, of a family member who needs medical treatment, or of an elderly relative who need help.<sup>79</sup> It is difficult to measure these family networks or to express them in financial terms, yet they are part of these transnational networks between residents and migrants.

Migrants also transfer what has recently been labelled ‘social remittances’, which include the transfer of ideas, practices, and behaviour such as respect for the environment, of human rights, of gender equality, democracy, social equality, and the like.<sup>80</sup>

Remittance flows are the most important and influential network between families in the source countries and those in the destinations. Based on a survey carried out to study Arab Canadian attitudes toward Canada and their countries of origin in 1974, Abu-Laban noted that “of the foreign-born, 50% had sent money to relatives in the Old Country. Of the Canadian-born respondents, a total of 22% had sent money to relatives in the Old Country at one time or another...”<sup>81</sup> Abu-Laban goes on to assess that “the fact that one-half of the foreign-born and over one-fifth of the Canadian-born had sent money to kin abroad illustrates not only the reciprocity one might anticipate with the first generation immigrant, but in addition feelings of responsibility beyond the first generation.”<sup>82</sup>

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78 Peleikis, 2000 and 2003.

79 Peleikis, 2000, p. 304.

80 P. Levitt, ‘Social Remittances: A Conceptual Tool for Understanding Migration and Development’, Working Paper Series, Number 96.04, October 1996 [http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/hcpds/wpweb/96\_04.pdf], Internet consulted January 10, 2006.

81 Abu-Laban, 1980, p. 172.

82 *Ibid.*, 1980, p. 172.

Assisting family members is not limited to those who live in Lebanon; in his extensive research on transnational Lebanese migrant family, Ghassan Hage found that money transfers in the form of remittances that were transferred formally through banks and money transfer agencies and operators, and informally through friends, or family members, or personally, were significant and were transmitted not necessarily to family members in Lebanon but to other family members, around the world.<sup>83</sup>

Remittances to Lebanon, whether in cash or in kind, are sent in several ways. The volume of the money and the formal way through which it is sent through the banking and financial transfer system is what we are relying on in terms of statistics in this paper. However, informal ways, such as immigrants bringing along money on their visits, or sending it with friends or family members, will not be estimated here.<sup>84</sup>

Lebanese remit enormous amounts because Lebanon allows free flow of capital and hard currency and encourages and facilitates the inflow of migrants' remittances through formal and informal channels. Emigrants remit because Lebanon has "stable exchange rate, a very developed banking system with one branch per 5,000 inhabitants, with international standards, a tradition of banking secrecy, and competitive interest rates. Furthermore, Lebanon has 557 money transfer outlets, of which 437 are Western Union branches, and 120 Money Gram dealers."<sup>85</sup>

Remittances are becoming a fundamental feature of Lebanon's economy; they also represent a sizable proportion of Lebanon's foreign revenue. Lebanese expatriates' remittances have been keeping the country afloat with inflow increasing every year. In 2003 Lebanon received \$2.7 billion in workers' remittances, ranking it ninth in absolute terms among the principal recipient developing countries.<sup>86</sup>

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83 G. Hage, 'Issues of Structure and Culture in Researching The Lebanese Transnational Family', lecture presented at the Lebanese Emigration Research Center, NDU, May 19, 2004.

84 Ghobril, 2004. Any study of household informal receipt of remittances must take into consideration informal family income and informal family expenses.

85 *Ibid.*, 2004.

86 *Ibid.*, 2004.

#### D. REMITTANCES INFLOW TO LEBANON

Remittances played and continue to play a vital role in the life of Lebanon and its people. It was and is the most stable of financial flows. On the micro level, remittances are considered a safety net for families afflicted by unemployment, underemployment, the burden of children's education and/or the problem of caring for the sick and elderly. Facilitated by both the sending countries and the receiving countries, remittances "have emerged as a critical insurance mechanism for residents of countries afflicted by economic and political crisis (Lebanon during its civil war, Haiti), those hit by natural disasters (...)." <sup>87</sup> Further, on the macro level, remittances increase the country's stock of foreign currency, and when consumed, remittances generate positive multiplier effect even if they are mostly used for consumption.

Between 1990 and 2003, on average Lebanon ranked seventh among the top 20 main recipient developing countries with respect to remittances, following countries sizeable according to geography and population (India, Morocco, Philippines, Egypt, Turkey, and Morocco). Similarly, Lebanon was positioned third among top recipient developing countries with respect to remittances as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) following Lesotho and Tonga. <sup>88</sup> In 2004, Lebanon ranked fifteenth among the world's top small recipient developing countries with respect to remittances when they are considered as a share of the GDP. <sup>89</sup> Lebanon is also among the top world recipients of remittances, when measured on a per capita basis. In 2001, Lebanon was first among the top ten *per capita* recipient countries in the world with \$575. <sup>90</sup>

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87 Devesh Kapur and Center for Global Development, 'Remittances: The New Development Mantra?', August 25, 2003, [[http://www.livelihoods.org/hot\\_topics/docs/RemitMantra.pdf](http://www.livelihoods.org/hot_topics/docs/RemitMantra.pdf)], Internet consulted on January 10, 2006.

88 International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook: Globalization and External Imbalances*, April 2005, p. 72, [<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2005/01/pdf/chapter2.pdf>], Internet consulted December 20, 2005.

89 Over 10% of Lebanon's GDP is resulting from remittances. D. Ratha, 'Sending Money Home: Trends in Migrant Remittance', *Finance and Development magazine*, International Monetary Fund, Volume 24, Number 4, December 2005 [<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2005/12/picture.htm>], Internet consulted on January 10, 2006.

90 Ghobril, 2004.

For several years, Lebanon “was vulnerable to a balance of payments crisis because its foreign debt stood at nearly five times the size of its exports. Yet, such a crisis did not materialize, most likely because of remittances sent by its diaspora are about as big as Lebanon’s exports (about \$2.4 billion in 2002). The ratio of Lebanon’s debt to exports is halved when remittances are included in the denominator.”<sup>91</sup> Remittances from abroad “are a safety net and at times a lifeline for what many families see as a no-growth economy with few opportunities.”<sup>92</sup>

Remittances are vital to the Lebanese economy especially as they feature 13.8% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Lebanon ranked eighth in the top ten recipients of workers’ remittances as percentage of GDP in 2001.<sup>93</sup>

Remittances ease the budget constraints of their recipients. They also increase the recipients’ consumption of goods and services, investment in education, land purchasing, and financial investments such as government bonds. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Lebanon’s *per capita* income from workers’ remittances was \$575 for 2001. With this amount Lebanon was at the top of the ten *per capita* recipient countries in the world.<sup>94</sup>

Expatriates’ remittances to Lebanon continue to help underpin its economy. Lebanon averaged \$1.63 billion annually. Remittances were 7.4% of the GDP in 1998, but augmented to 8.5% in 1999, to 9.7% in 2000, and to 13.8% in 2001. On an annual basis, these inflows have equalled between 7 to 13% of GDP. For comparative purposes, it should be mentioned here that Lebanon’s main hard currency income earner is tourism. However, remittances were 275 times the tourism receipts in 2001.<sup>95</sup> It is evident from these numbers that remittances are becoming indispensable to the Lebanese economy and they are increasing significantly.

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91 Ratha, ‘Why Should We Care...’, 2004.

92 USAID, ‘Lebanon’, [<http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/cbj2003/ane/lb/>], 2003, Internet consulted on December 20, 2005.

93 Dilip Ratha, ‘Workers’ Remittances: An Important and Stable Source of External Development Finance’, in *Global Development Finance*, Chapter 7, 2003, [<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTRGDF/Resources/GDF2003-Chapter7.pdf>].

94 Ghobril, 2004.

95 ‘Expatriates’ Remittances Have Become Key to the Lebanese Economy, Averaging \$1.63bn Yearly, Reaching Nearly 14% of GDP in 2001 and Growing Faster Than Other Growing Faster Than Other Sources of Foreign Currency’, *Saradar Weekly Monitor*, Issue 15, March 31-April 5, 2003, p. 9.

Lebanese expatriates' remittance constitutes 22% of household incomes in Lebanon and 88% of their savings.<sup>96</sup> And although there is great lack in information and in analysis on the impact of remittances on local villages and communities, the situation in one of the villages in South Lebanon may give us a glimpse of that impact.

Lala is a village in the Bekaa Valley that seems to rely heavily “on remittances as a source of income for a large number of village residents.”<sup>97</sup> In his survey in the summer of 1989, H. Amery found that “some ninety-seven out of 125 sampled households in Lala receive remittances.”<sup>98</sup>

In Lala, remittances are used in building homes rather than in agriculture land development;<sup>99</sup> “this home-construction activity is having a positive though small impact on the village's economy because a large number of skilled and unskilled workers and contractors are from nearby villages and towns.”<sup>100</sup>

In the village of Zrarie in the South of Lebanon remittances come mainly from the Ivory Coast: “The most visible impact of remittance income on the village is the large amount of new construction. Whereas before, small flat-roof houses built of clay and yellow stone dominated the whole village, today huge, individually styled villas, some of them still under construction, rise above the village (...).”<sup>101</sup>

The impact of remittances is multidimensional; in certain cases remittances are changing social status and land ownership. In Zrarie, for example, remittances have “given people of poor origins the opportunity to accumulate wealth and status. By the late ‘sixties, the impact of this new Shi’ite wealth was strongly felt in the South, where migrants invested

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96 Ghobril, 2004.

97 H. Amery, ‘The Effects of Migration and Remittances on Two Lebanese Villages’, Ph.D. Dissertation, McMaster University, Canada, 1992, p.179-181.

98 *Ibid.*, 1992

99 H. Amery, and W. Anderson, ‘International Migration and Remittances to A Lebanese Village’, *Canadian Geographer*, Vol. 39, No. 1, p. 54.

100 Amery, 1992, p.181.

101 Peleikis, 2000, 307.

in large agricultural estates that once belonged to the old dominant families of that region...”<sup>102</sup>

In Lala a “sense of dependency on remittances is developing quite strongly as a number of young and able men refuse to do manual labour because they do not have to.”<sup>103</sup>

In the latest World Bank publication, Lebanon ranked 28th among the top 30 countries with highest emigration percentage; in proportion of its educated labor force, emigration rate in Lebanon exceeded 38 percent.<sup>104</sup>

Assem Safieddine, professor of finance at AUB, described how the “brain drain affects the prospect of inducing change on the socio-political level, especially on the level of corporate governance [in Lebanon]...” He also noted “qualified human resources are leaving due to the deteriorating social and political situation...”<sup>105</sup>

This exodus of educated manpower does not seem to bother either the government or the banking sector in Lebanon. In fact, some banking circles believe that the remittances of the Lebanese expatriates, which amounted to an estimated \$2.7 billion in 2004, compensate for Lebanon’s loss in human capital.<sup>106</sup>

Nassib Ghobril has proposed that migration should be viewed as an economic gain. He argues that the amount of foreign currency remitted back to Lebanon from its emigrants plays “a key role in the Lebanese economy as compared to other sources of foreign exchange revenues

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102 Peleikis, 2000, 307.

103 Amery, 1992, p. 181.

104 Ç. Özden and M. Schiff, *International Migration Remittances, and the Brain Drain*, World Bank and Palgrave, Macmillan, 2006, pp. 173-176

105 A. Safieddine ‘Brain Drain or Brain Gain? A Nation and Its Diaspora: Lebanon’s Future is Bound up with its Relationship with Lebanese Living Abroad, and its Ability to Keep too Many More from Following Them’, *The Daily Star*, Assem Safieddine, February 24, 2004, [[http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition\\_ID=1&article\\_ID=7256&categ\\_id=1](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_ID=1&article_ID=7256&categ_id=1)], Internet consulted on September 23, 2005.

106 Ghobril, 2004.

such as exports and foreign direct investment (FDI) and tourism receipts.”<sup>107</sup> He further contended: “Remittances have raised the income of individual recipients in Lebanon and increased the country’s foreign exchange deposits and reserves. Therefore, they have offset some of the output losses from the ‘brain drain’ of students and skilled workers and created a positive network effect on trade, investment and business relationships.”<sup>108</sup>

## E. CONCLUSION

Given the lack of studies on the subject, an exhaustive overview and more extensive data collection on transnational Lebanese emigration and remittances are currently unobtainable. It is clear however, that the volume of emigration outflow and remittances inflow have increased in importance as the country’s ‘push’ and the regional and international ‘pull’ factors continue to polarize the Lebanese, especially the young and educated.

Lack of employment opportunities and security in the country continue to encourage emigration as a solution. For a country as small as Lebanon, being one of the 30-top skilled emigration countries in the world is not indicative of the country’s good economic situation. In its most recent publication *International Migration Remittances and the Brain Drain*, the World Bank stated, “in relative terms (in proportion of the educated labor force), small countries are the most affected [by emigration].”<sup>109</sup> In Lebanon such emigration exceeds 38.6 percent,<sup>110</sup> which means that over one third of the educated labor force is leaving the country.

Emigration from Lebanon is not felt on the local level because the remittances sent back home from the diaspora offset some of the losses, especially in terms of tax revenue. On the household level, emigration is felt particularly in terms of family relations, although the money sent by emigrants to their families alleviates part of the economic burden.

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107 N. Ghobril, ‘Expatriates’ Remittances Key to Lebanese Economy, Averaging 1.63bn annually and reaching 14% of GDP in 2001’, *Saradar Weekly Monitor*, Issue 16-March 31-April 5, 2003, p. 8.

108 Ghobril 2003, p. 9.

109 Ç. Özden and M. Schiff, 2006, 173.

110 *Ibid.*, 175-176.

Although the volume and value of the remittances sent to Lebanese families are sizeable, the effects of these remittances have not been studied, either on the macro economic or on the micro-economic level. What we can sense from the continuous exodus of the young and educated is that these remittances have not been invested to create job opportunities, but rather are spent on household consumption, education, health, and care of the elderly. Remittances may have raised the standard of living of households or stimulated trade and commercial transactions. However, whether or not remittances contribute to structurally enhancing the living conditions of their recipients in Lebanon has yet to be demonstrated, as far as I am aware, through empirical research.

We know that remittances are sent to Lebanon, but we do not know whether the senders are recent temporary emigrants, first-generation emigrants, or second-generation emigrants. We are also ignorant of the geographic source of these transfers and the profile of their senders. The Lebanese emigration of 1975-2001 consisted largely of first-generation emigrants, and although the second and third generations are growing rapidly, remittances might continue for a while. However, the question that the government in Lebanon should ask itself is whether the second- and third-generations will continue to send remittances to the same extent as their parents and grandparents did, or whether the country needs to keep exporting emigrants in order to continue alleviating its economic shortcomings.

We are also uninformed about the impact of emigration on the development, demography, and social life of Lebanon. Discourse on ‘brain drain’ *versus* ‘economic gain’ has not yet been taken out of the newspapers and the political rhetoric moved to the academic realm into and serious parliamentary debate in Lebanon.

Emigration research in Lebanon has not developed to accompany that of the field of migration studies. Hence, there is a great and urgent need to increase Lebanon’s capacity building in this domain of research and to encourage the government of Lebanon to take into account this vital human capital movement, i.e., emigration of the young and educated, to eliminate obstacles, political and otherwise, to pave the way for real economic growth, and to

enhance its laws and to make them more transparent to facilitate investments and the creation of jobs.

For the emigrants in general, the government may seek to increase their political participation through voting in *absentia*;<sup>111</sup> it may formulate appropriate policies to allow them to participate in pension plans and health services; and for those whose parents neglected to establish and/or maintain their citizenship, the government should amend existing laws that will facilitate their re-naturalization.

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111 In the summer of 2005, the Lebanese government created a National Committee to draw up a new electoral law for Lebanon; several diasporic groups and other interested non-governmental agencies including LERC are lobbying and have sent proposals in favor of absentee voting.

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