

# Analytical Study Monitoring Rural and slum Poverty reporting In Lebanon

A report of one-month from April 2nd to May 1st survey of two Tvs, two Radios and three Newspapers



Photo by AMANI EL ALI

Conducted by

**Maharat Foundation**

In Cooperation with



**World Association for Christian Communication**

**WACC**



communication FOR

**all**



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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

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Moreover, this report would not have been successful without the professionalism of the monitoring team as well as all the experts and organizations’ representatives that enriched our study by sending us their feedbacks.

# ORGANIZATIONAL BRIEF

## About Maharat Foundation

MAHARAT Foundation, (Arabic for “Skills Foundation”) is a team of Lebanese journalists & Media experts united by a common purpose, which is to achieve a free and professional journalism and to defend and promote freedom of expression in order to build a much more democratic society. MAHARAT considers that enrooting the idea of peace, tolerance, acceptance and participation in society through media practices can only be achieved through independent, professional and diverse media .MAHARAT is part of the International Freedom of Expression exchange (IFEX), a global network of around 80 organizations worldwide. Through IFEX, Maharat reports and alerts are circulated worldwide in English, French and Arabic, to thousands of subscribers and website visitors.

## About WACC

The World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) is an international organization that promotes communication as a basic human right, essential to people’s dignity and community. WACC works with all those denied the right to communicate because of status, identity, or gender. It advocates full access to information and communication, and promotes open and diverse media. WACC strengthens networks of communicators to advance peace, understanding and justice.

## INTRODUCTION: ABOUT THE PROJECT

This report presents the results of monitoring the media coverage of a sample selected from the Lebanese newspapers, televisions and radios over a 30-day period that extended from April 2<sup>nd</sup> to May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013. It was part of a project to monitor media coverage of poverty issues, supported by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC).

This project, which is the core of this study, aims to measure and analyze the level of commitment of the media outlets to the criteria of professional media coverage, as well as the size of coverage allotted to the issues of poverty in Lebanon, from various legal, humanitarian, and professional aspects.<sup>1</sup>

The monitoring methodology has been organized by Maharat Foundation and the WACC, taking into consideration the established international standards and the Lebanese particular situation. In addition, a part of the criteria was dedicated to measuring and analyzing the gender aspect through the media coverage of poverty issues.

The importance of this analytical study lies in its quest to understand the Lebanese media outlets' mechanisms, given the very significant role the media, in general, plays in highlighting the general issues that concern the society and the people, not to forget its immense and direct influence on the protection of rights and freedoms, the formulation of public policies, and the formation of the public opinion.

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<sup>1</sup> Maharat Foundation has conducted numerous analytical studies of the reality of the media coverage through various monitoring projects like:

- Monitoring the Media Coverage for the Parliamentary Elections in 2009
- Evaluating the Public Broadcasting Service in Lebanon - Tele Liban - in 2010
- Monitoring the Media Coverage of Domestic Workers Affairs in 2012
- Monitoring the Hate Speech in Political Talk Shows in 2013

For that reason, the role of the media becomes very important, namely the way it approaches public issues including poverty in Lebanon.

The time frame of this project is around ten months. This includes the time allotted for preparing the methodology, monitoring, gathering information, analyzing the results, preparing the final report, as well as arranging the necessary instruments to implement the recommendations and results of this project and urge the media to take into account the importance of a fair, honest, and courageous coverage of poverty issues in Lebanon, in line with the international standards for human rights and the professional journalism standards.

We put this final analytical study at the disposal of the academics, researchers, journalists, decision-makers and the civil society organizations, in the framework of the efforts to support and encourage the media to address poverty issues in Lebanon in a broader and more meaningful manner.

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Maharat Foundation elaborated an analytical study in collaboration with World Alliance for Christian Communication (WACC) to monitor the media coverage of poverty in Lebanon, especially in rural areas, for a month, starting April 2 until May 1 2013.

A sample of TV and radio stations and newspapers was chosen based on the following criteria:

- Media outlet adoption of Arabic language; of the media outlet is Arabic-speaking;
- Media outlet diffusion all over the Lebanese territories;
- Media outlet diversity in programs and contexts addressing many public issues that concern the Lebanese citizens.

Noting that social networking websites and electronic news website were excluded from this study, the monitoring consisted on the following media in terms of political, religious and professional diversity:

- Newspaper: Annahar, Assafir, Al Akhbar
- TV channels: LBCI and Al Jadeed
- Radio Stations: Sawt El Mada, Sawt Loubnan (100.5)

### **THE METHODOLOGY**

The study monitored all the content of the chosen sources including all the press materials, news, interviews, reports, opinion prices, pictures, caricatures that are directly related to stories on poverty in the rural areas or slums in Lebanon during the specified period of the study.

Quantitative and qualitative monitoring standards were adopted: the first one was based on the allocated spaces, the issues raised as well as the targeted people and areas. On the other side, the quantitative monitoring analyzes the media content and how it was tackled from a professional journalistic aspect.

### **Part 1: The results of the newspapers (Annahar, Assafir, Al Akhbar)**

As a result, the total number of issues was 90 while the number of stories directly related to poverty did not exceed three. This study excluded the stories related to Syrian refugees and Palestinian camps in Lebanon.

As a result, the coverage was strictly limited to poverty issues in slums and not in rural areas.

### **Part 2: The results of the TV channels (LBCI and Al Jadeed)**

Only two reports were monitored in the thirty days newscasts for LBCI and Al Jadeed. LBCI's report was about 127 seconds while the report on Al Jadeed was about 96 seconds.

This study did not include news reports related to development or to people's life demands in general without being linked directly to stories of poverty.

Overall, the media coverage of the slums reached 25% while the media coverage of rural areas reached 75%.

### **Part 3: The results of radio channels (Sawt el mada and Sawt Loubnan 100.5)**

The noon news bulletins of Sawt El Mada and Sawt Loubnan were monitored for 30 days. Out of 60 noon news bulletins on the radio, no audio report addressed poverty directly.



The results, though their negative indication of the radio channels media coverage, do not differ much from the results seen in the newspapers and television stations which were confined to three news stories and two televised reports.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The most important resulting from this analytic study pertaining to covering of media of issues of poverty in rural areas and slums are as follows:

- A necessity for the allocation of the different media of more space in their newscasts to cover issues of poverty
- Allocation of part of media follow-up for the execution phases for the National Program to Support the Poorest Families, launched on October 17th, 2011;
- Taking into account the diversity in the nature of issues brought up in the media and associated with poverty, without restricting them to general issues linked to poverty in general;
- Highlighting the role of women in investigative and news reports in terms of reflecting their abilities and the positive energy they have instead of representing them as victims in general;
- Shedding light on various aspects of the piece associated with poverty, including the identification of the responsible governmental sides, and listening to their responses as opposed to the complaints of people and their demands to reach a conclusion which serves the purpose of preparing a investigative report;
- Keeping clear of the element of thrill in the investigative reports should it be used only to attract viewers, and avoiding dissemination of stereotypes related to gender issues or geographic areas.

## **CHAPTER I: MEDIA AND POVERTY**

The aim of this study is to monitor how the Lebanese media addresses the poverty issues in Lebanon from various legal, humanitarian, ethical and professional aspects.

The Lebanese media is part of the diverse environment of the Lebanese scene and is responsible for acting as a liaison between various segments in the Lebanese society, the public authority officials and a range of central and local administrative and governmental bodies.

Lebanese citizens suffer from lack of strategic plans designed by the state in general. They also suffer from neglect and indifference about their daily life matters, causing disorder and cessation of communication among the state's bodies and citizens, many of whom are living at the poverty line in the poor rural areas and popular neighborhoods.

According to the report of the Universal Periodic Review of Economic and Social Rights submitted by the civil society organizations in Lebanon to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in December 2010, around 8% of the Lebanese population lives under extreme poverty conditions. This means that around 300,000 people are unable to satisfy their food and non-food basic needs.

The "Integration and Flexibility" report issued by the World Bank in 2012 also revealed that 80% of the Lebanese population believes that it is the government's responsibility to address poverty; 77% of the Lebanese people are dissatisfied with the government-led efforts to support the poor and believe that the current policies and programs of social safety nets are ineffective. The report underscored the decisive importance of engaging citizens in a dialogue on the possible reforms to be introduced to the social safety net and raising awareness through media campaigns.

The state has finally come to realize the importance of combating poverty in Lebanon, launching on October, 17, 2011 the National Program to Support the

Poorest Families, a program that assists the poorest families through social and educational benefits.

The role of the media in covering poverty issues is an essential part of the social safety net system. It also contributes to raising awareness among the marginalized groups and engaging the underprivileged groups in formulating government policies associated with the necessary reforms and monitoring the governmental execution of its commitments and obligations in this regard.

## CHAPTER II: MONITORING METHODOLOGY

### **Targeted media**

The monitoring period extends for thirteen days, starting from April 2nd until May 1st, 2013. A number of printed and audio-visual media outlets are selected.

A sample from the media was selected according to criteria, the most important of which are:

- Media outlet adoption of Arabic language; of the media outlet is Arabic-speaking;
- Media outlet diffusion all over the Lebanese territories;
- Media outlet diversity in programs and contexts addressing many public issues that concern the Lebanese citizens.

### **The sample included the following media outlets**

- Daily newspapers: Al-Nahar, Al-Safir, and Al-Akhbar.
- TV channels: LBCI and ALJADEED.
- Radio stations: Sawt al-Mada and Sawt Loubnan (100.5)

Restricting the study to the abovementioned media outlets does not necessarily mean that other media outlets do not have the same criteria. But we opted for selecting a sample that expresses an image of the Lebanese media in terms of political, religious and professional diversity. The study did not include electronic news websites or social networking websites.

## **Samples of the targeted media**

### ➤ Regarding the newspapers

The study monitored all the content of the targeted newspapers, including news, reports, interviews, opinion pieces, pictures, and caricatures that are directly related to stories on poverty in the rural or slums areas in Lebanon during the period dedicated for conducting the study.

### ➤ Regarding the audio-visual media outlets

The monitoring was confined to the main newscasts, excluding other morning or social programs and the daily and weekly talk shows.

Daily newscasts are a major concern for the various segments of the society, as they shed light on the most prominent incidents and topics that concern the public opinion through airing reports or investigative reports highlighting the problem, its causes, the state's stand and suggested solutions. The reports usually pertain to corruption and humanitarian or human rights issues that touch on the daily lives of the people and their human dignity.

The monitoring included the evening news bulletins aired by the TV channels, and the afternoon news bulletins of the radio stations.

## **Monitoring Criteria**

Quantitative and qualitative monitoring standards were adopted.

### ➤ Quantitative criteria

It is based on analyzing the targeted media content into analytical data through the data coding system. The analytical data was based on a number of measurement tools, labels and variables that vary depending on the media outlet under monitoring. The data collection methodology was based on quantitative data, shown in figures and percentages, in analyzing the digital data, in order to



avoid repeating the analysis unit in the target sample by using the statistical program (Statistical Package for Social Sciences SPSS). The elements of the content analysis were designed in a way that allowed us to measure the distinction among the media reports that are similar in quantity and quality.

For example, the monitored spaces in newspapers are measured in centimeters or pages, while in televisions and radios, the monitored spaces are measured in seconds. The monitoring also determines how different the type of the presented media content is, in terms of a piece of news, interview, report, investigative report, or an opinion in various monitored media outlets.

The quantitative monitoring determines the position of the story and its importance for the monitored media outlet, such as the news appearing in the front page, the headlines, the news column, the security issues' page, or miscellaneous page amongst others. In addition, the quantitative monitoring determines the geographical place of the story and its framework, its general perspective, and the space allocated to it. The study did not also overlook identifying standards to measure the direct access, stereotypes and gender issues through the coverage. The quantitative monitoring also identifies the people concerned with the story, their jobs, roles, gender, and age category. Then, the quantitative analysis concludes the significances behind the figures, whether in terms of importance, marginalization or the media language, in addition to comparing the figures among the media outlets to know how distinctive and particular each of them is in approaching the topic, as well as the differences among them.

#### ➤ Qualitative criteria

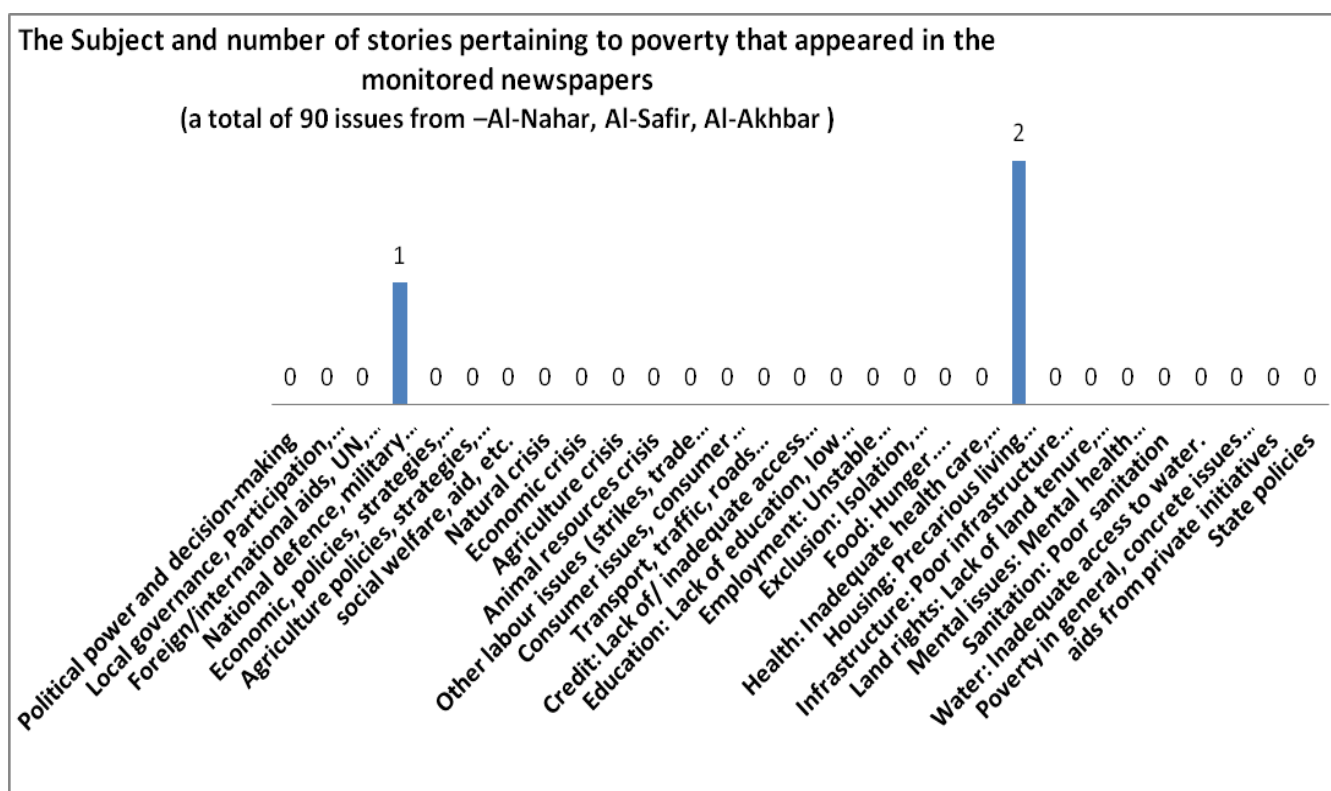
Many indications cannot be inferred through the quantitative data analysis. While quantitative monitoring is based on measuring the spaces, number of words, duration, the replication and the number of persons in question and their jobs and situation and personality, qualitative monitoring analyzes the media content and how it was tackled from professional journalistic aspects in terms of style,

language, bias, accuracy, phrases, graphics, among other journalistic styles that influence the context of the story and its influential aspects in general and create a certain image for the receiver.

## CHAPTER III: QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS IF THE TARGET MEDIA COVERAGE

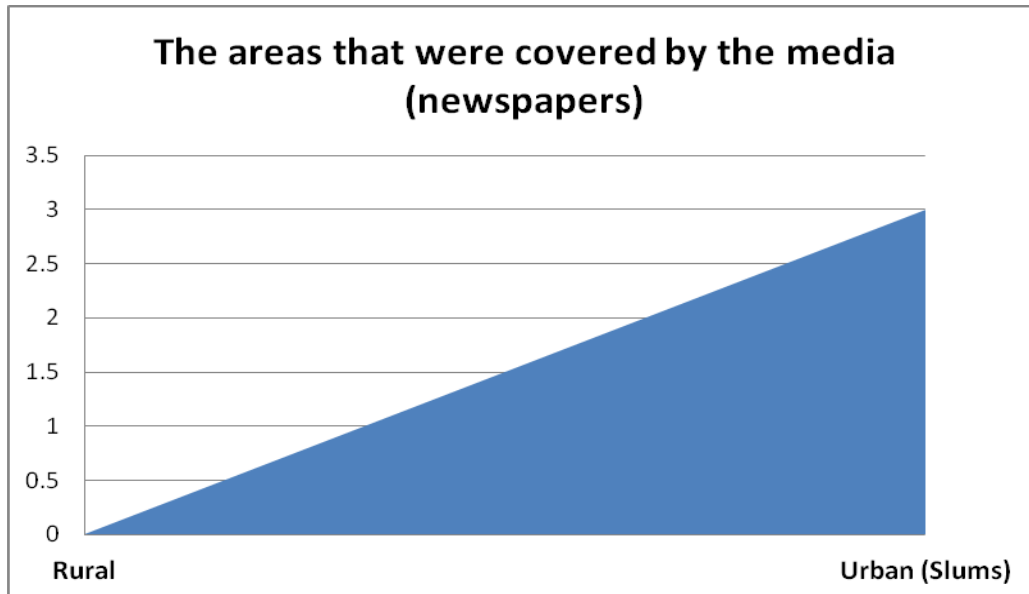
### First: Newspapers (Al-Nahar, Al-Safir, Al-Akhbar)

The Subject and number of stories pertaining to poverty that appeared in the monitored newspapers (a total of 90 issues from –Al-Nahar, Al-Safir, Al-Akhbar ):



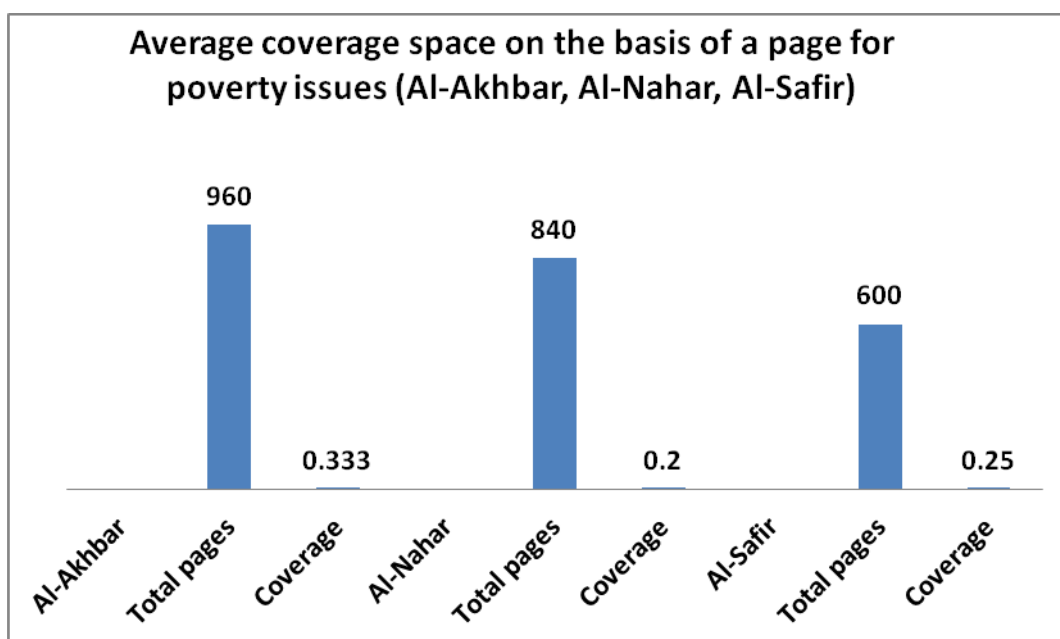
The monitoring shows that the number of stories directly addressing poverty issues did not exceed three. The monitored newspapers published a fair number of stories on the Syrian refugees and their sufferings and circumstances. This study does not address the coverage of the Syrian refugees or the situations inside the camps. It only addresses the journalistic and media substance that is directly related to poverty in the Lebanese rural areas and slums.

➤ **Press coverage in terms of geography**



The stories that appeared in the newspapers mainly focused on the slums in urban areas, not rural areas.

➤ **Average coverage space among the monitored newspapers on the basis of a page**

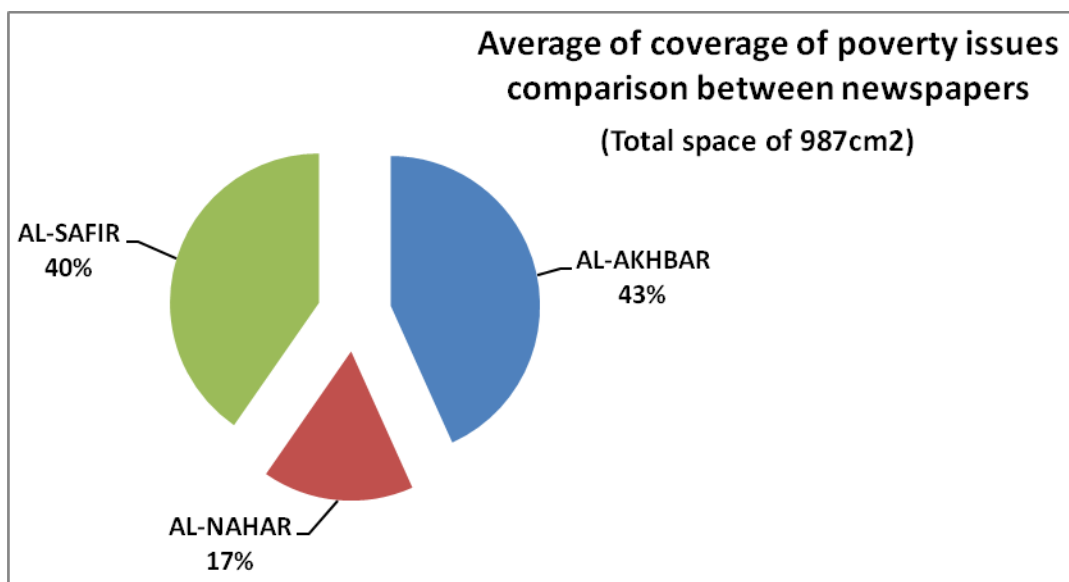


In addition to measuring the coverage space with cm square, we also measured the coverage by the page as a unit of measurement.

The result showed that out of 960 pages in Al-Akhbar newspaper, only 0.333 page was allotted for stories pertaining to poverty.

In Al-Nahar, out of 840 pages, 0.2 page was allotted for poverty issues, while 0.25 page in Al-Safir out of 600 pages.

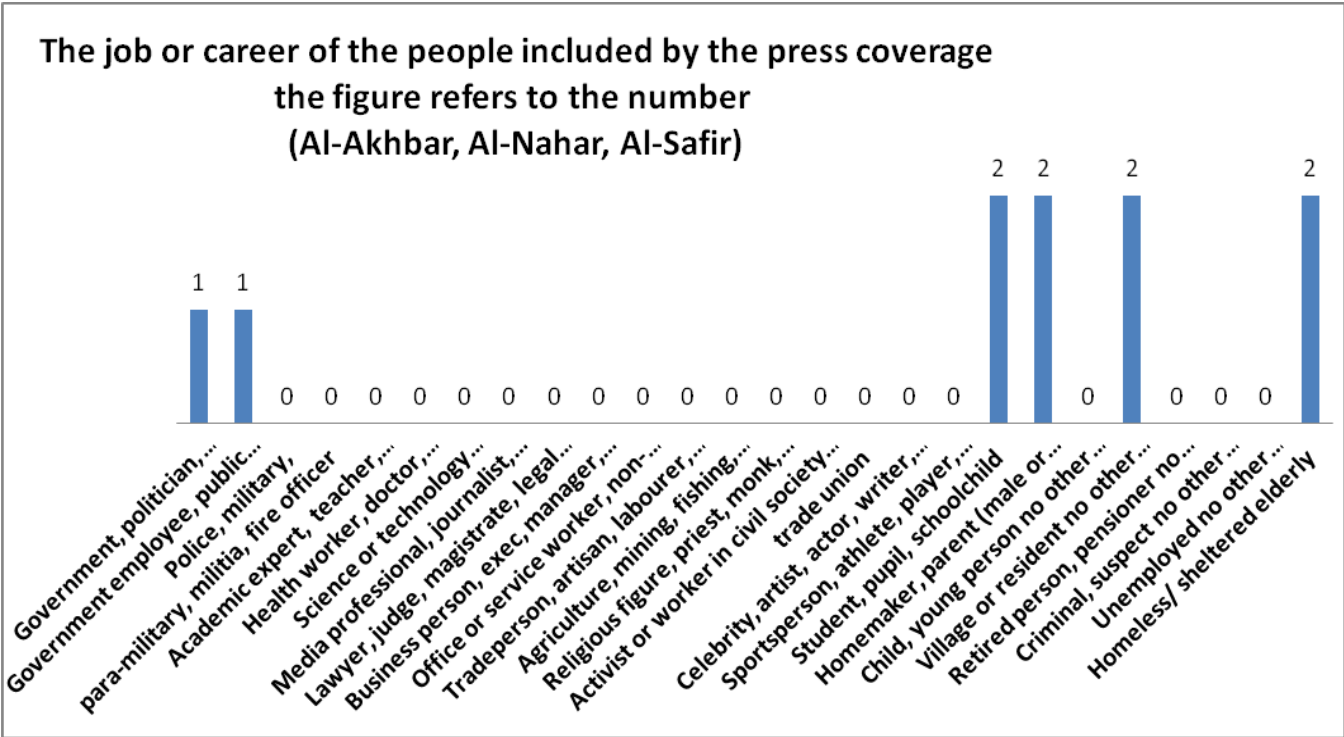
➤ **Average of coverage of poverty issues: (comparison between newspapers)**



The above ratios compare the size of coverage allotted for poverty by the monitored newspapers on the basis of the total space allocated which amounting to 987 cm square.



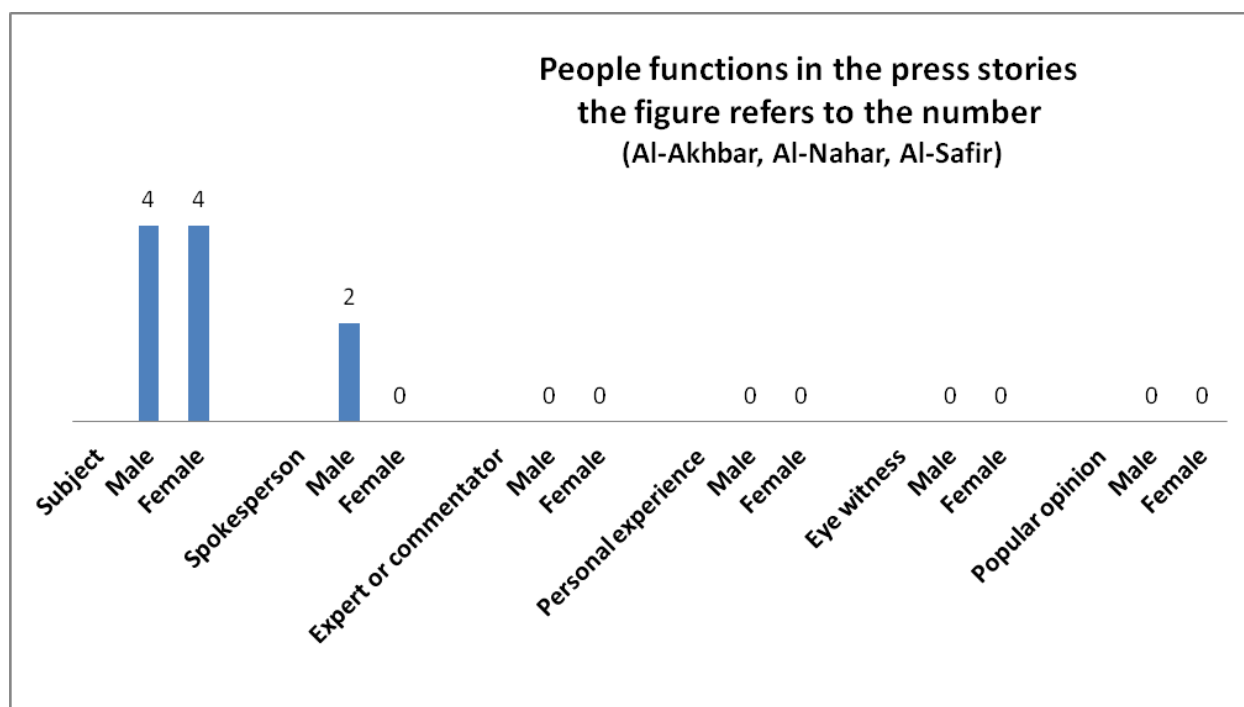
➤ **The job or career of the people included by the press coverage in the monitored story**



This chart measures the extent of diversity in the stories pertaining to poverty in terms of including various parties of the society.

The number of stories pertaining to poverty did not exceed three stories in the monitored newspapers over a period of 30 days. This would normally reflect on the limited results that appear in this chart.

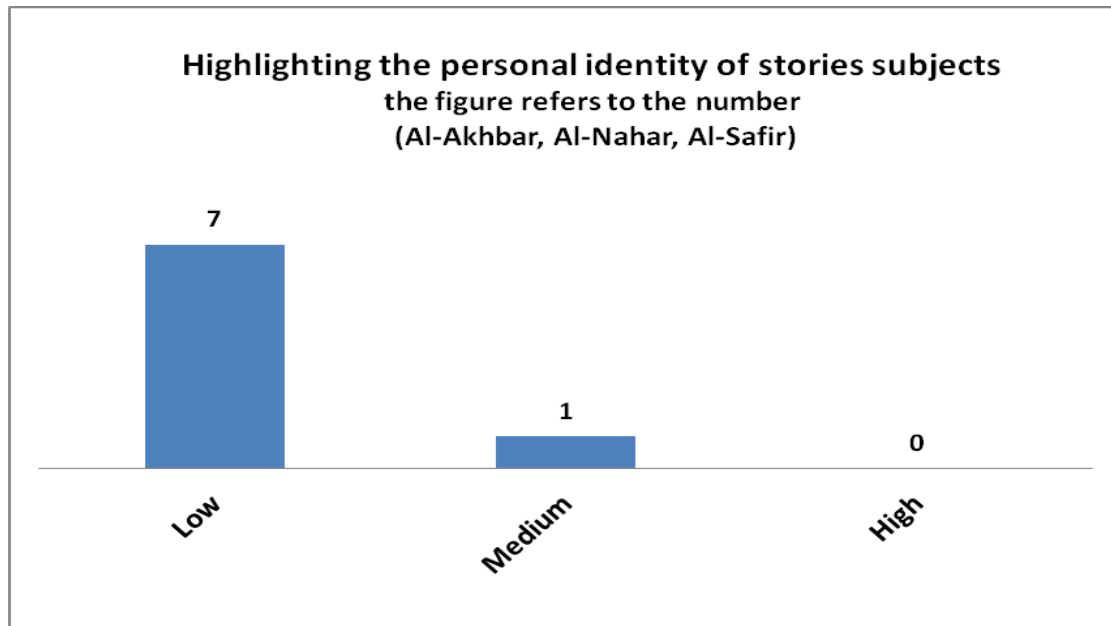
➤ **Functions of the people in the stories according to the press coverage**



In addition to the diversity in the careers and jobs of the people who appeared in the story, their roles in the story represents a positive or negative indication in terms of the usefulness of the press coverage and the purposes behind it. The more varied the roles of the people in the story were -- albeit focusing on the main people struggling with poverty -- the more influential the story becomes in terms of the message it conveys.

The results revealed by this chart (in terms of the role distribution in the monitored newspapers) show that the gender of the people speaking on behalf of a public administration are males (two men, no women).

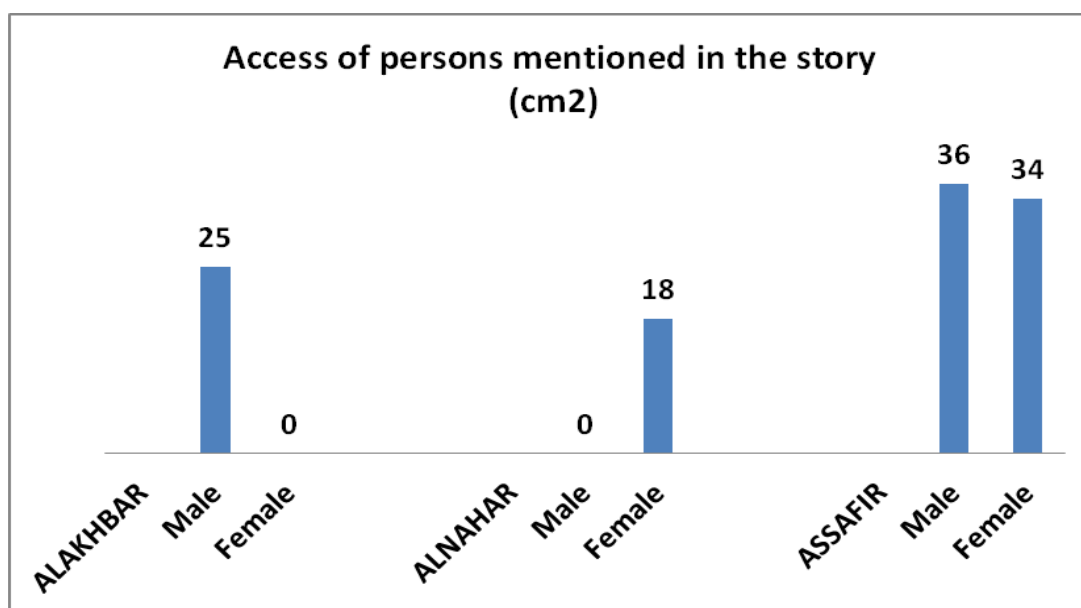
- **Highlighting the personal identity of the person who is the center of newspapers story**



It was noticed that personalization of the subjects in the stories were inadequately highlighted in general (average: Low: 7; Medium: 1; High: 0).

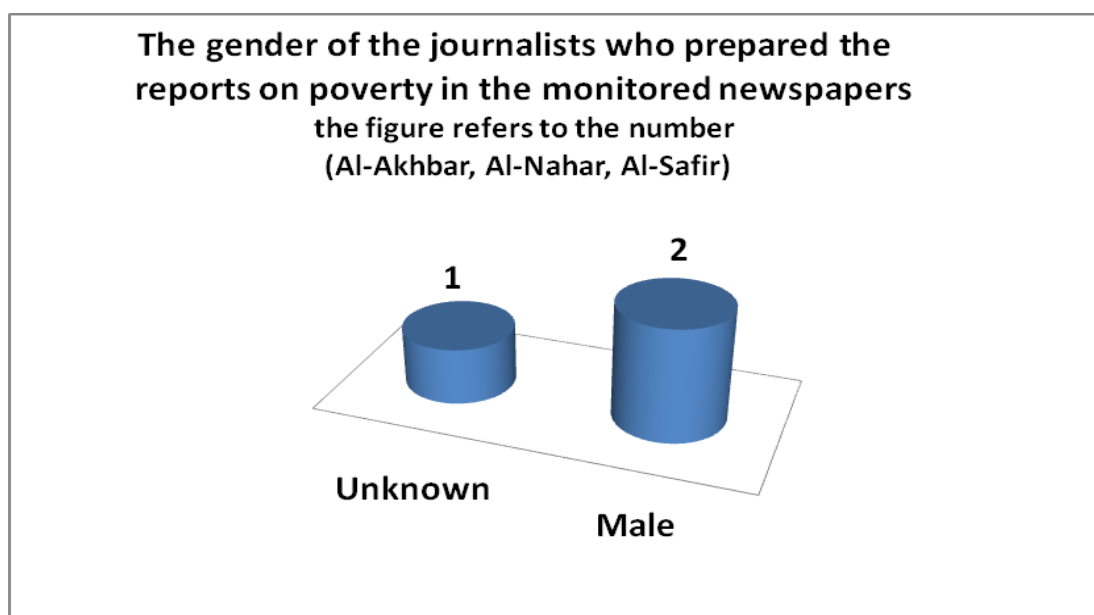
This indicator measures the depth of the investigation as it reveals the identity of the persons and other details pertaining to their personality and daily life.

- **The space of direct access to the persons in the monitored poverty issues (cm square)**



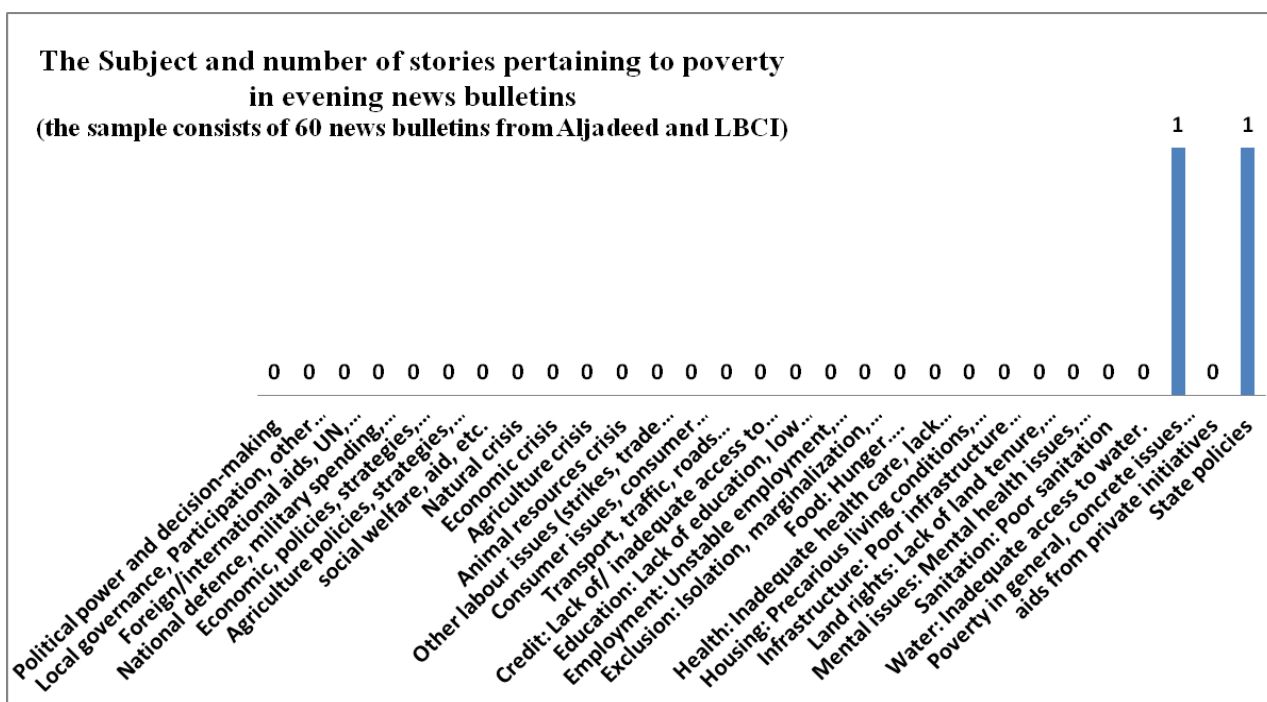
The space of direct access represents the space allocated by the monitored newspapers for the persons who were mentioned in the poverty stories.

- **The gender of the journalists who prepared the reports on poverty in the monitored newspapers**



## Second: Audio-Visual Media (Aljadeed and LBCI)

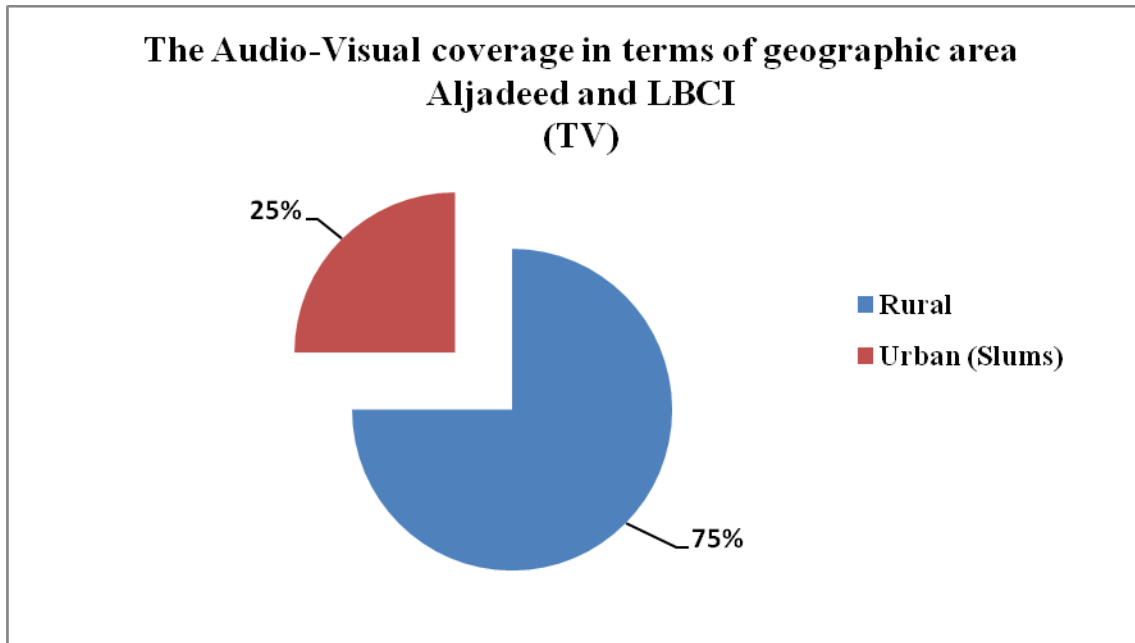
The Subject and number of stories pertaining to poverty that appeared in the evening news bulletins (the sample consists of 60 news bulletins from Aljadeed and LBCI).



The results showed that the news stories that addressed poverty directly did not exceed two out of 60 reports presented during the evening news bulletins. As we pointed out earlier, the monitoring methodology only included the stories addressing poverty in rural areas and slums. Therefore, the news stories on development or those addressing livelihood demands raised by the people (without being directly related to poverty) were excluded from this analytical study.

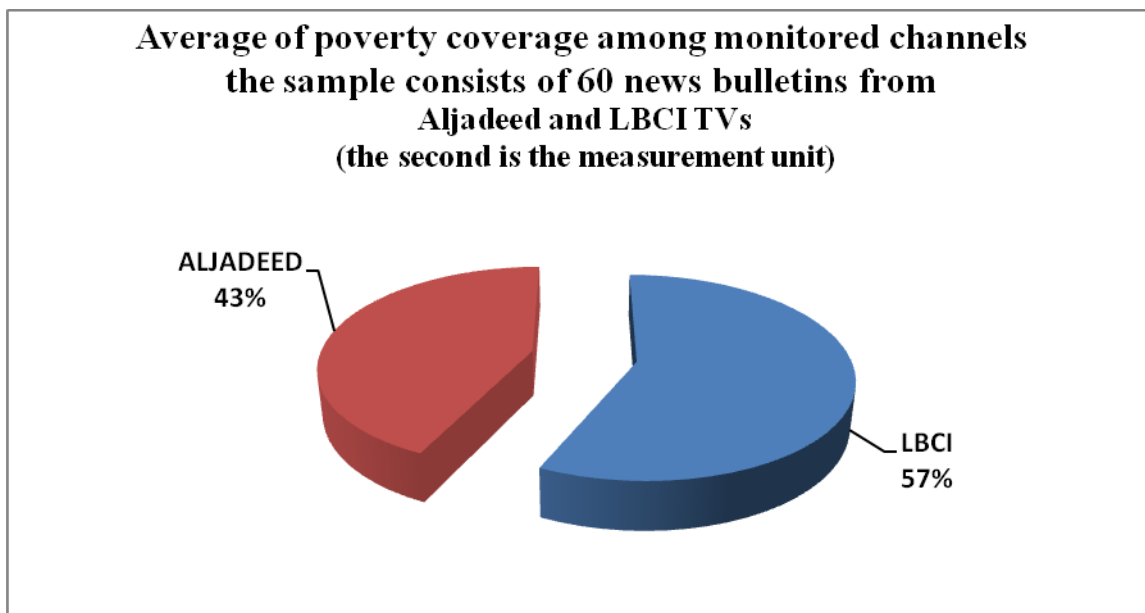


➤ **The Audio-Visual coverage in terms of geographic area**



25% of the news stories that appeared in the monitored television channels focused on the slums of the urban areas, while 75% on rural areas.

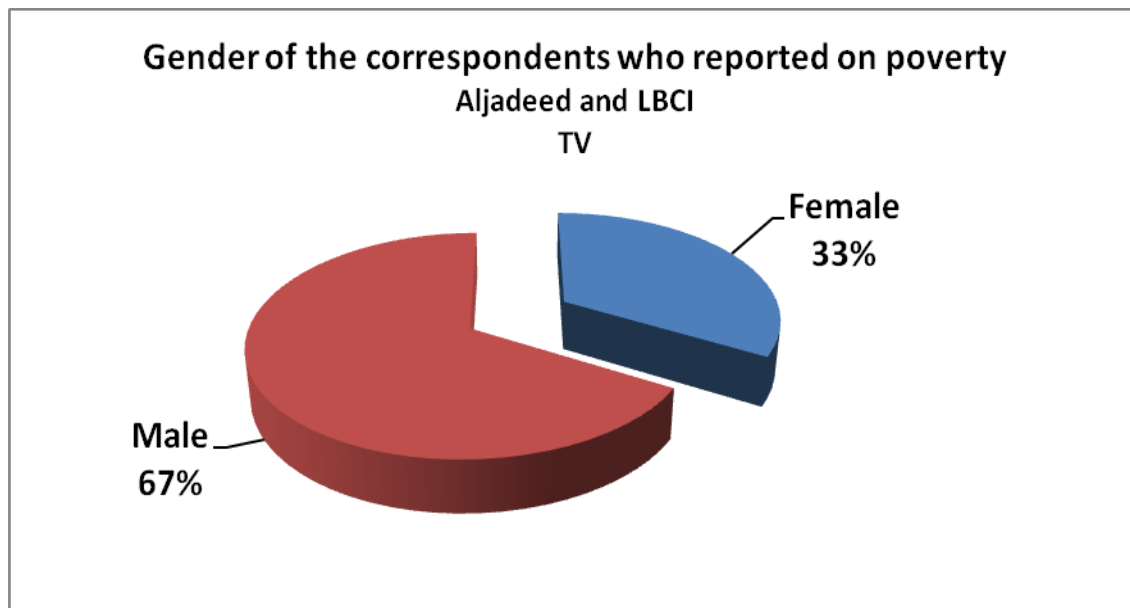
➤ **Average of poverty coverage among monitored channels (the second is the measurement unit)**



The above ratios compare the space allotted for poverty stories between the two monitored channels, based on the space allotted (per second) for the two reports monitored in this study.

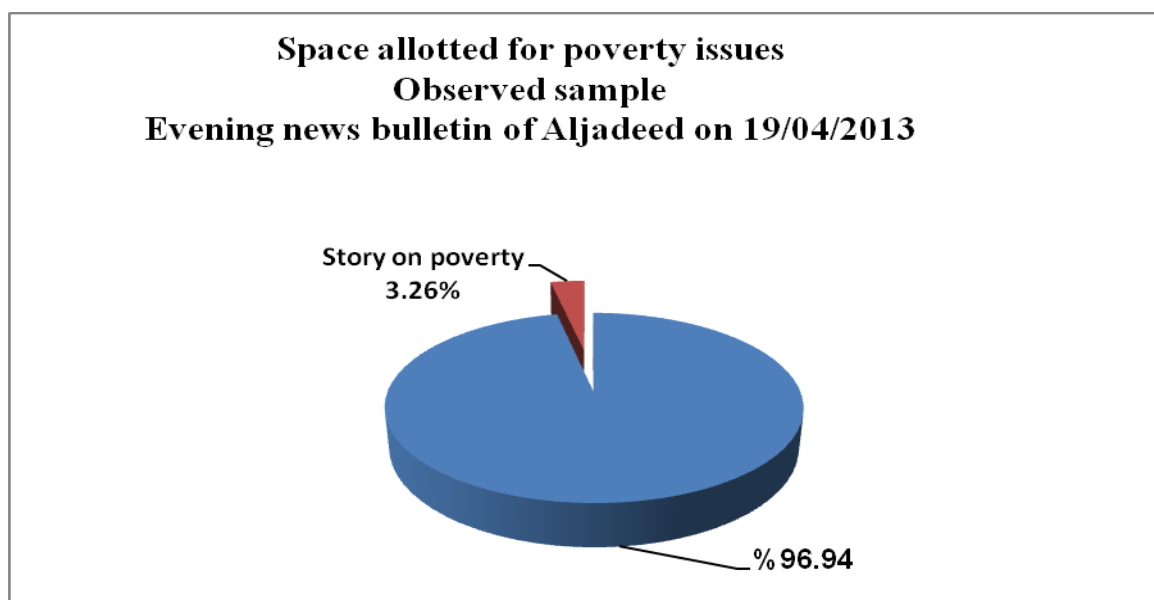
The percentage indicated the space allotted for the two reports aired by the two TV stations. The duration of the LBCI report was 127 seconds, while that of the Aljadeed was 96 seconds.

➤ **The gender of the correspondents who prepared the reports on poverty in the two monitored TV channels**



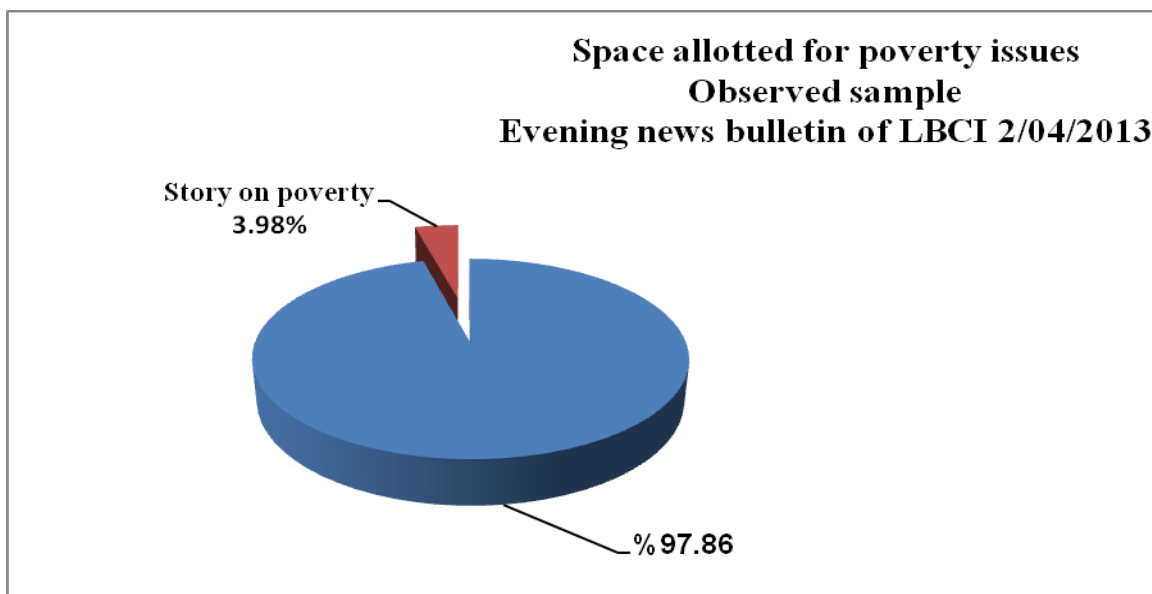
➤ **The space allocated for poverty issues in an observed sample of news bulletins**

1- The duration allotted for poverty issues in the evening news bulletin of Aljadeed on 19/04/2013:



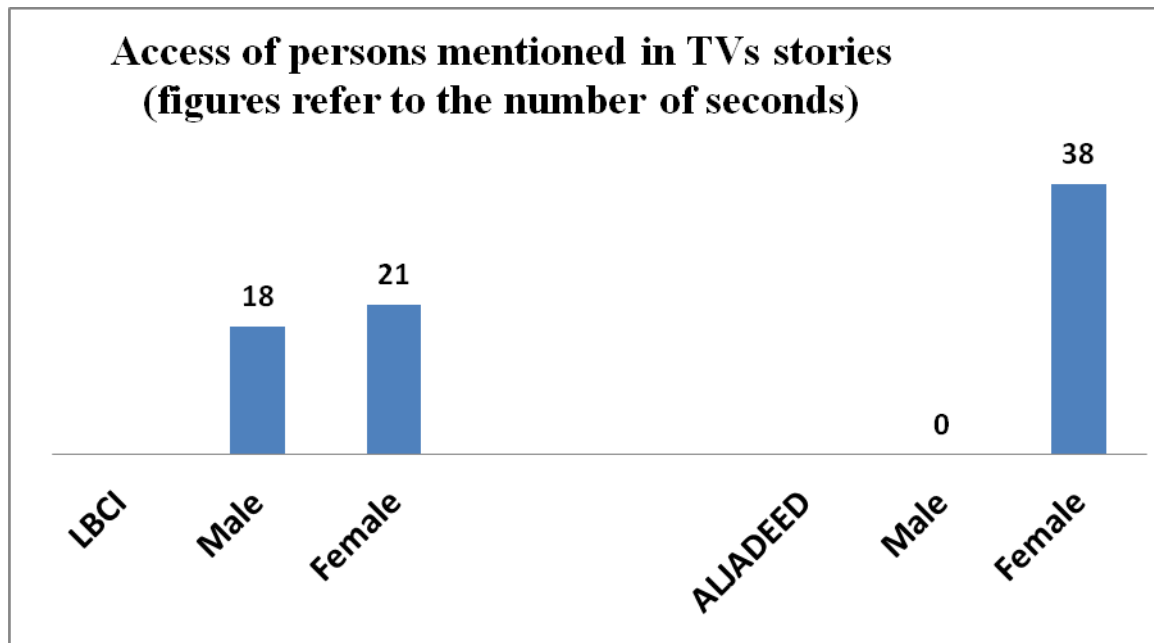
Aljadeed allocated 3.26% of its evening news bulletin on April, 19, 2013, for a story on poverty, in general, in a border village in Akkar.

2- The duration devoted for poverty issues in the LBCI evening news bulletin on 02/04/2013:



LBCI allocated 3.98% of its news bulletin on April, 2, 2013 for a story on poverty, the public policies and the rule of law in the slums of Hay al-Sellom, Al-Fa'ur, and Al-Dalhamiyah (in Beirut Southern Suburbs and Al-Bikaa).

➤ **The space of direct access to the people mentioned in the stories**

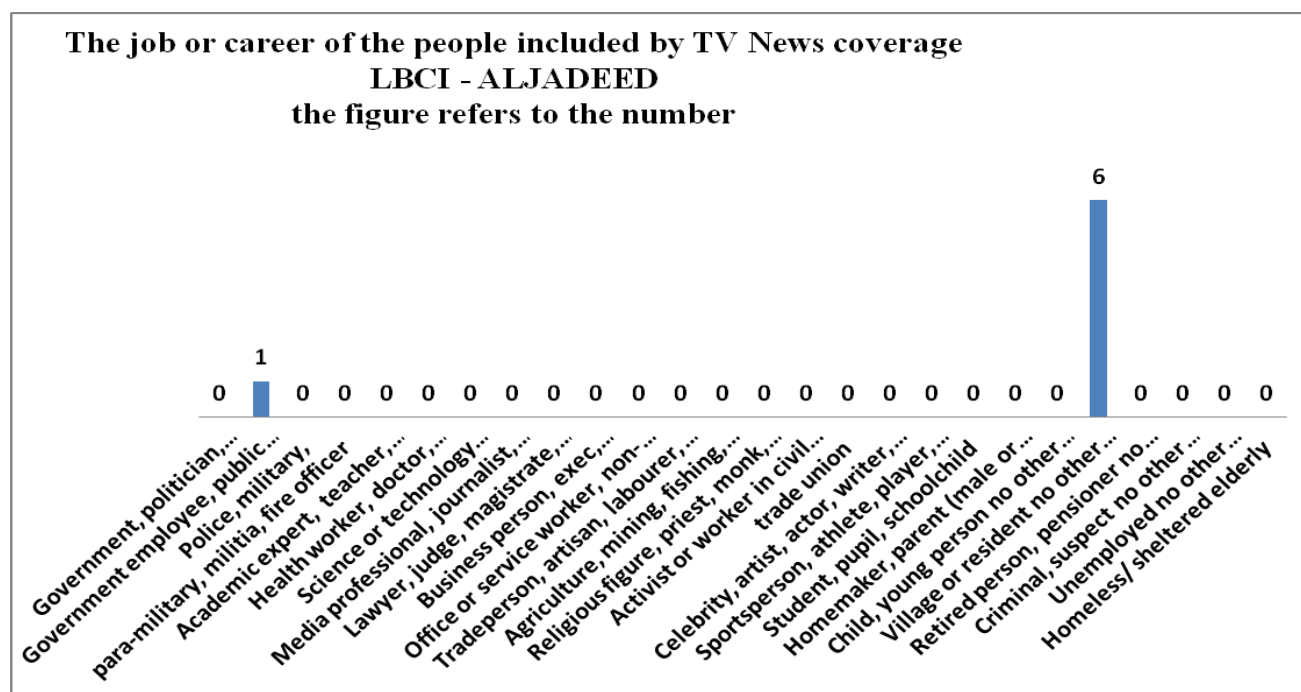


The space of direct access represents the space given by the monitored televisions for the persons mentioned in the story. While this space was 38 seconds in Aljadeed -- totally given for females -- it was 39 seconds in LBCI (21 seconds for the females; 18 seconds for the males).



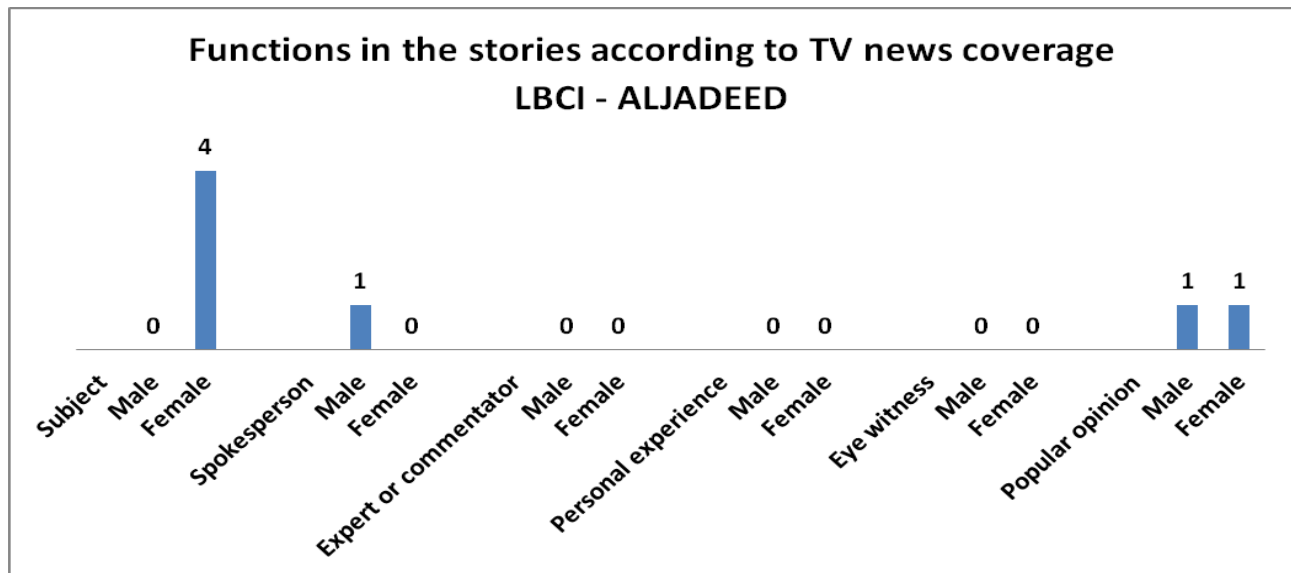


➤ **The job or career of the people included in the Audio-Visual coverage (LBCI, Aljadeed)**



This figure measures the extent of diversity in the stories addressing poverty, in terms of including various parties of society. The number of stories addressing poverty did not exceed 2 in the television channels that were monitored for 30 days. It is normal that this would be reflected on the limited results of this chart.

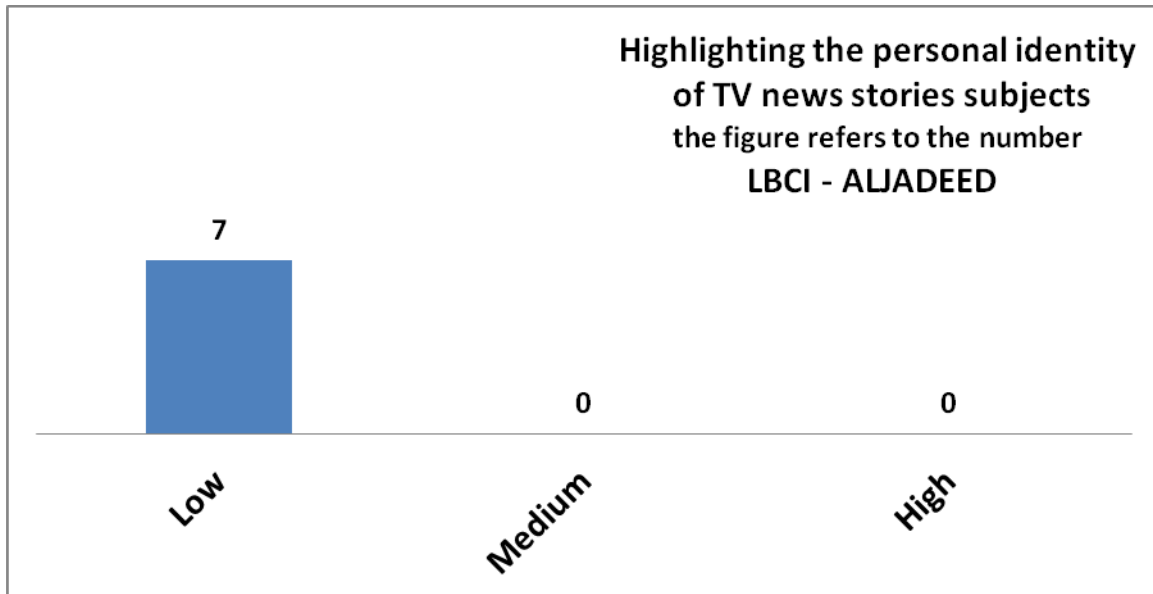
➤ **Functions of the people in the stories according to TV news coverage**



In addition to the diversity in the jobs and careers of the people appearing in the story, their role in the story is a positive or negative indicator in terms of the usefulness of the news coverage and its purposes. The more varied the roles of the people in the story were -- albeit focusing on the main people struggling with poverty -- the more influential the story becomes in terms of the message it conveys.

The chart above shows that the roles were distributed on seven people, four of whom are the core of the story and all of whom all girls, in addition to one spokesperson for one of the public administrations (male) and two persons speaking for the public opinion (a male and a female).

➤ **Highlighting the personal identity of the person who is the center of TV news story**



In general, the personal identity of the person who is the subject of the story was poorly highlighted (Average: Low). The short duration of the news reports that do not exceed two minutes in most cases prevents the author from diving into the daily life details of the person who is the subject of the news story. Increasing the time allotted for the news report would allow highlighting various aspects, thus underlining humanitarian and human rights facets in the news stories.

### **Third: Audio Media (Sawt al-Mada and Voice of Lebanon 100.5)**

The noon news bulletins of Sawt al-Mada and Voice of Lebanon (100.5) were monitored for 30 days.

Out of 60 noon news bulletins on the radio, no audio report addressed poverty directly.

This conclusion, albeit a negative indication of the nature of the media coverage of radio channels, the results do not differ much from the results seen in the newspapers and television channels which were confined to three news stories and two televised reports.

The radio media coverage addressed incidents and issues other than poverty, ones pertaining to rural areas, such as the abduction operations in Aarsal and Al-Hermel in Al-Bekaa and Wadi Khaled in Akkar, in addition to stealing electrical cables from the public power network in Al-Shouf and the grenades that fell on Al-Hermel and the physical and materialistic damage they left. Moreover, issues like the movement carried out by the families of the kidnapped Lebanese citizens in Syria were covered, such as their attempt to prevent Syrians from working in the slum area of Hay al-Selloum, the protests held by the farmers in the north, the south, and Al-Beqaa against the policy of protecting the crops and securing external markets, the increasing prices of vegetables and fruits in the local market as a result of the hindrances to exportation and importation through land crossing since the Syrian crisis hampered the passageways of the trucks, the security tension in Tripoli between Bab al-Tabbanah and Jabal Muhsin, the increasing number of Syrian refugees arriving via the border and the risks of the spread of epidemic diseases, protests to prevent municipalities from granting construction permits in rural areas in Akkar and the slums in Tripoli, construction violations in Al-Baddawi and Wadi al-Nahlah, as well as testimonies on the suffering of the Lebanese on the civil war anniversary (April 13).

## **CHAPTER IV: QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE COVERAGE OF THE TARGET MEDIA**

### **First - Newspapers**

The newspapers addressed the issue of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon, following up on their affairs in various regions, particularly the poor rural areas in the north, Al-Beka, or the south.

Al-Safir newspaper allotted a series of reports published over subsequent days titled "Al-Safir with the Syrian Refugees" addressing the affairs of refugees in various places. A full page was allotted to these reports in every issue. The newspaper also published various photos that reflect their lives and circumstances. Al-Akhbar and Al-Nahar published reports on the Syrian refugees in many issues.

Beyond no doubt, the Syrian refugees have become a hot issue in Lebanon and the region, and thus it is normal that the media, in general, and the press, in particular, dedicates a space to highlight this topic from its political, security, health, livelihood, and human rights' aspects.

Other topics on rural areas and slums also appeared on the pages of the monitored newspapers, most important of which are the security tension between Jabal Muhsin and Bab al-Tabbanah [two poor regions in Tripoli], the mobile protests and road cut-offs in the north and Al-Bekaa demanding the state to pay compensations for those who were affected due to security incidents or agricultural recession or the competition of the Syrian fruits and vegetables, the security news in Wadi Khalid and Akkar pertaining to the Syrian crisis and the refugees and the smuggling of weapons into Syria, and sheltering members from the Free Syrian Army.

The coverage also includes issues related to the widespread of epidemic diseases among the refugees, the grenades falling in Al-Hermel, the mutual abduction between Ersal and tribes from Al-Hermel, the movement carried out by the families of the Lebanese nations kidnapped by a Syrian group, and the attempts to prevent Syrians from working in various places, including the poor neighborhood of Hay al-Sellom.

Some reports also addressed the competition of the Syrian labor for the Lebanese workers in many professions, including the selling of vegetables and fruits and the opening of restaurants. In Al-Bekaa alone, more than 260 restaurants were opened by Syrians.

As for poverty issues in rural areas and slums, the press did not adequately address this issue. Three stories appeared in the three monitored newspapers during 30 days.

The qualitative analysis of the three stories that addressed poverty revealed that these stories included the following topics:

- 1-The humanitarian and life situation of the families living in the poor area of Baal al-Darawish (a poor area in Tripoli), located between Bab al-Tabbanah and Jabal Muhsin. (Al-Nahar).
- 2- Poverty in Wadi al-Nahlah in Al-Baddawi and the repercussions of curbing construction violations in this region. (Al-Akhbar)
- 3- The issue of poor widows' shelter, also known as al-khankah, in Tripoli.

➤ **In relation to the first topic entitled, "Children on the Demaraction line", Al-Nahar, 13/04/2013**

The report includes a picture of a boy and a girl returning from school, carrying their school stuff and walking side by side on a street reflecting traces of war and negligence, as if abandoned, and looking at the camera

lens in surprise and innocence. The wall behind them carries the words "Ashahid Ahmad - The Martyr Ahmad".

The journalistic genre used draws close to the narrative genre, both literary and descriptive. In the introduction of the report, the journalist raises the problematic of the journalistic story and the conclusion he reaches through saying "the Tripolitan scene which is hard to comprehend" and continues to say, "This is what we've encountered during a visit to Baal al-Darawich".

This introduction makes it clear that the report will delve into the Tripolitan scene through Baal al-Darawich area in order to analyze the elements which make up this hard-to-comprehend scene according to the journalist's saying. In addition, the introduction of the report talked about a visit to the area of Baal al-Darawich to prepare this story which reflects the tragic scene of that region.

The report resorts to a recount of the opinion of "Hayat", a woman who is screaming while standing on the balcony of one of the buildings. She, the mother of five children and a wife of an unemployed man, describes in sorrow, heartbreak and pain their rancorous living realities. The mother insists on the reporter to ask her son, Jamil, about his ambitions; Jamil loathes bearing arms and dreams of being a teacher. His school mate, child Sarah, however, hates the camera and isn't afraid of bullets.

Hayat voiced her worries in the investigative report by saying, "We are being treated like lab rats. We are human beings, terrified and poor, and there is no place to move to; all I want is safety for my husband and children, I am fed up with this life."

This cry this woman expresses sums up the situation of those poor people in that region.

The investigative report comes out as shallow in regards to the display of people's sufferance, and is restricted to the opinion of a woman screaming from one of the buildings and two children playing in the swings.

The report fails to mention the opinion of a sample or a larger number of people, and even so delving more into the details of poverty and hard life they live and the reasons lying behind it.

➤ **As it comes to the second topic entitled, "The Poor Martyrs of Al-Baddawi", Al-Akhbar, 30/04/2013**

The topic of the journalistic story revolves around the poor people in Wadi al-Nahla region and the history of gathering in that area through modern history, and their condition as it comes to aspects of existence, working, living and construction violations in their area.

In contrast to Al-Baddawi construction violations' report aired on Sawt al-Mada radio station and referred to in this study, where the North region was portrayed as disobedient to government and security, and as transforming into an emirate in everything even construction and which failed to leave any exclamation marks on the causes of these violations, the investigative report published in Al-Akhbar delves into the suffering of the poor in Wadi al-Nahla area, in specific, and the poor everywhere, in general, considering that everyone raises the topic of construction violations without questioning what brought things to such a level.

The report included a recount of the realities of housing and livelihood for the people living in Wadi al-Nahla area and in the neighboring areas of Al-Baddawi and Mankoubeen.

This report has been prepared following bloody clashes between the army and security forces during a campaign to remove construction violations which abounded in that area and led to a number of dead and wounded people.

The writer of the report entitled his investigative report as "The Poor Martyrs of Al-Baddawi", which is inspired from the words of the brother of



one of the dead men who fell in clashes with security forces. The man portrays his brother as "The martyr of the poor people".

The journalist's sticking to the side of the poor living in Wadi al-Nahla area and its neighboring areas is very clear. Apart from the title mentioned above, he is being sympathetic through the phrases which were repeated in the report, such as, "All of the officials do not care about these areas", "The residents are considered second-class citizens and even less", "Their houses are modest", "Their houses... most of them are roofed with zinc panels (tin)", "Misery belts", "Marginalized citizens", "Victimized people", "Marginalized groups"....

Media bias to the issues of people's rights is not considered a professional drawback and is a subject of academic and professional controversy, yet it justified the number of construction violations which occurred in that region in a broader scope, based on poverty and need. The report was not balanced as it in terms of presenting the point of view of the municipality or mayor as it comes to the charges of negligence or failure to stick to their duties filed against them.

➤ **As it comes to the third topic entitled, "The Widows of 'al-Khankah' awaiting Death", Al-Safir, 9/04/2013**

The investigative report pursues the issue of the poor widows living in al-Khankah, in Tripoli. This report sheds light on a specific type of rare shelters in Lebanon, where widows who lost their husbands and have no breadwinner live, all under an Ottoman Empire mandate decree which is still applied until the present time. In addition to the fact that the building is a shelter, it is also an archeological facility going back to the Mamluk era, and it is owned by the Islamic Waqf, which oversees its administration. The report came out balanced in terms of showing the point of view of al-Waqf and paying a close ear to its residents, whether in terms of the services

provided or cracks found in the roofs and the walls of the building, humidity and water which fills the place in the winter.

The living conditions of al-Khankah residents were summarized by the words of Samiha al-Kojk, who lives in that place, "The people of the neighborhood provide us with food from time to time,... the situation is difficult and unbearable, and today I am waiting for death because I am living in a tomb no one can endure."

The style of suspense in the title was adopted in this journalistic investigation as in the other journalistic reports, the subject of this study. In general, the press relies on such styles to draw the reader and catch the attention of public to the issues raised. In spite of the element of thrill in these titles, they remain under the context of the conventional journalistic work framework agreed upon, as long as they don't fall under the frame of spreading rumors and promotion of mendacious news or distorting truth or overpowering one point of view over another in contrast to the principle of integrity in journalism.

## **Second – Television Channels**

The newscasts in LBCI and Aljadeed monitored over the period of thirty days, included two news reports: The first on the campaign of removal and control curbing of violations related to encroaching upon the public power network in both areas of Hay al-Sellom and Al-Bekaa areas, and the second on destitution and poverty in Akkar.

With regards to the report aired by Aljadeed station on 19/4/2013 on destitution and poverty in Akkar, the following analytical observations can be recorded:

The report did not specify the name of the area in Akkar from which scenes are taken from and which portray the situation of its residents living in extreme poverty and destitution. The photographs of the houses taken reveal a tragic

situation related to the situation of the building those people living in, in addition to their poor living conditions.

Not mentioning the name of that area is considered a gap in the news report in terms of accuracy. After all, the report imbued the situation of poverty, destitution and privation on all the regions of Akkar, an image of which is far from being true. Also, the word "Citizens of Akkar" was repeated various times in its general context without specifying the residents of Akkar areas relevant to this report.

The complaints of the people living in that victimized, yet anonymous, area of Akkar, were voiced, in terms of the lack of facilities, services and governmental aid in whole, though the Syrian refugees are receiving assistance and all their needs are met, to the extent that the Lebanese families in need in that area wish they would be treated as refugees so that their situation improves.

The report omitted shedding light on the administrative authorities directly involved in that area, from local administrations such as the municipality, if existing, or central such as district, or the prefecture, or governmental such as Human Rights Council, in hope one of these departments would face its responsibilities pertaining to providing relief to those areas living below the poverty belt, literally.

The media resorted to generalizing stereotypical images of Akkar as a remote, disadvantaged area whose citizens live under the poverty belt and away from the basic services for a human being, in general. This is what the report tried to portray and generalize.

The report aired on LBCI station on 2/4/2012 and which was prepared to keep up with the campaign of getting rid of violations on the public power network, however, shed light on the concerns of people, requests and complaints, pertaining to absence of the government and the malicious employees in Electricity of Lebanon.

The report balanced between listening to the opinion of the inspectors involved in the campaign of getting ride of violations on the power network and that of the citizens, the people living in those poor areas covered in the campaign, beginning with the poor area of Hay al-Sellom in the Southern Suburbs of Beirut and reaching areas of Al-Fa'ur, al-Dalhamiyah and rural Tirbol in Bekaa.

The report allotted space for citizens' complaints against the practices of the state and its public establishments. The report also was sympathetic with the citizens without giving them an appearance of aggressors or outlaws, through promotion of the idea that as long as the government is absent and forsaking its duties towards the citizens then they cannot be held directly responsible for breaking the law. One of the women on the street said sarcastically, "They say that the state does not exist, look at them...They're welcome and if God wills they will remove every power cord; perhaps they will provide us so that God would do the same for them."

Another citizen opposes a ticket given him, explaining in the report how he applied to subscription in the electric meter from the establishment offices twice and the request was denied the first time for the absence of a wall allotted for it, so he bought a wall for the amount of 500,000 Lebanese pounds, to no avail. And even though he paid this sum, his request was yet again denied for no reason, to which he stated, "The government teaches the citizen to seal and then asks him why he is stealing; this is far from being logical."

The report describes the campaign as a show of muscles, considering that the security of the government in removal of all of the violations is more like a dream, similar to another Lebanese dream for receiving electricity 24 hours per day.

### **Third – Radio Stations**

Two radio reports shed the light of those in charge on the monitoring process. They were aired on Sawt al-Mada radio station on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of April, 2013 bulletin. The first delves into the opinions of people and fighters in a round between the neighbouring and similar areas of Bab al-Tabbanah and Jabal Muhsin

in terms of poverty and difficult living conditions their citizens encounter. The second report, however, is related to the construction violations in the poor area of Wadi al-Nahla – Al Biddawi in Tripoli.

Both reports were prepared in areas living under the poverty belt, and both failed to speak to the point of the situation of extreme poverty in areas of Al-Baddawi, Bab al-Tabbanah and Jabal Muhsin. After all, the real reasons of fighting in Tripoli in addition to the increase of construction violations are poverty and the absence of government from various aspects of human development in those areas.

The United Nations became aware of this and considered in the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human rights that what human beings aspire to is liberation from fear, poverty and need.

From this standpoint, we brought into play the analysis of Sawt al-Mada report on construction violations in the North, in general, and al-Baddawi in specific, especially that dated on 27/4/2013:

The report began with the airing of the news of security forces implementing security measures in Al-Baddawi-Wadi al-Nahla area and removal of against-the-law buildings in the governmental grounds.

The introduction of the report showed that the measures of the security forces were in vain and late, and that there is an attempt to bring down the governmental prestige and establish law on the hands of the offenders who demonstrated in riot and prevented the security forces from doing their job. Also, the report spoke about complicity from senior officials in Internal Security Forces, who receive bribes to disregard construction violations, and about protection provided by Tripolitan leaders of axis of fighting who vow to protect the offenders. Then, the representative of the Order of Engineers in the North spoke about the phenomenon of construction violations and about the role of the Order of Engineers and its stance in regards to these violations in addition the role assigned to it. The report lasted for the period of 145 seconds, and the reporter mixed between the occurrences of some incidents in the North and the political opinion.

In terms of the facts included in the report, it generalizes the picture of construction violations in all the Northern regions, even though the recent incidents which led to the preparation of this report are the construction violations in the Al-Baddawi- Wadi al-Nahla region, and the report has already mentioned that security measures taken in this regard in that area.

The report tried to portray the Northern area as if disobedient to the state, and the security forces either unable to perform their duties or are complicit with the construction violators.

The reporter made a mistake in cutting through and addressing the subject of the report in terms of violations and abuses and forsaking the legitimacy of the state without delving into any side of the news investigation related to poverty and destitution in those northern regions or living conditions pertaining to standards of living and economy, though the causes of urban chaos and violations might lie in such aspects.

The report did not expose the real motives behind construction violations, nor why people living in those rural areas or slums evade applying for legal construction permits. Also, the report failed to refer in its discussion with the representative of the Order of Engineers in the north, to the ways, proposals and alternatives through which people can be sensitized, their affairs facilitated and their procedures for obtaining construction permits and reducing fees simplified.

The report mentioned that senior officers in the security forces are bribed to overlook violations. The real issue here is that the majority of violators are poor people, who live in disadvantaged areas, so how could they have money to bribe officers of high ranks? In any case, instead of paying money to bribe security forces, they could pay that kind of money to obtain a construction permit.

The report concludes, describing the situation in the north as pessimistic from various aspects, using the following words:

"In the north a building collapses as an indication of the fall of supervision and the law, and the idea of a single state collapses as if some people want to turn this area into an emirate independent in everything even construction."

What was stated in the conclusion of the report is nothing except an attempt to engulf the north region in general with a stereotypical image promoted by some political parties and a part of the media. Those try their best to make this area seem as if disobedient to the state, that it sets its own rules disregarding those of the government, and that the ghost of an emirate hangs over it

## CHAPTER V: FEEDBACK

### CSOs and experts

Due to the lack of results deducted from the monitoring of the chosen media in covering poverty issues in Lebanon, we expanded the study to include the feedback of some stakeholders and CSOs working in this field. They filled a questionnaire of few questions, directly related to the study that helped us analyze their opinions about the lack of the Lebanese media in covering poverty stories.

Through this adjustment, we aimed to shed light, adequately, on media performance concerning these stories and its social and humanitarian impact, as well as increasing the relevance of the issue at hand and to discuss the importance of the awareness about the situation of poverty and its implications.

On the other side, it helps detecting the influence of this coverage insufficiency on the organizations' activities and fighting poverty, in addition to extracting, from the feedback, some recommendations and solutions that will be discussed later on with the monitored media.

The main questions in the questionnaire were about the five following themes:

- The approval on the study results,
- The evaluation of the media performance in terms of covering the organizations' activities related to poverty issues,
- The impact of the lack of coverage on the organizations' mission,
- Its influence on poor people themselves,
- Give suggestions and recommendations to stimulate the media on a better and more effective coverage.



The following table represents the questions and answers of the organizations and individuals interviewed:

	<b>Head of Caritas Branch in Akkar, Reverend Father Michel Abboud</b>	<b>World Vision International</b>	<b>Ms. Veronique Abou Ghazaleh, Journalist and Researcher in media and poverty</b>	<b>Dr. Georges Sadaka, Researcher and Lecturer in the journalism department in the Lebanese University</b>	<b>Ms. Marie Antoinette Souaid, Head of the media unity in the Ministry of Social Affairs</b>	<b>Ms. Ghina Anani, Founder and Director of ABAAD</b>
<b>Do you agree that the Lebanese media does not cover poverty issues?</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Do the media follow and cover your</b>	Yes, some of them	Sometimes	-	-	Sometimes	No

<b>organization's activities?</b>						
<b>What are the motives of the coverage?</b>	The presence of a religious or political person	If the subject serves their interests	-	-	When the minister is present	The media give the priority to the political events specially in Beirut and some regions
<b>The impact of the media coverage on the organization's activities</b>	<p>The coverage contributes to increase volunteerism and donations</p> <p>The absence of coverage would decrease the exposure of</p>	Limit the information of people about these activities	Influence public opinion and weaken the possibility of making a change	Hide the main problems of the society and its solutions	-	-

	their activities					
<b>Does the coverage have any impact on poor people?</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>What are the main implications of this lack of coverage on poor people?</b>	Disregard some social cases that need urgent help	Pay no attention on some poverty cases	Marginalize the voice of the poor + Lack of communication between them and the decision makers to help them	The poverty cases seem non-existing and therefore, society problems increase	-	Disregard and marginalize the voices of poor people in Lebanon
	Continuous communication between the	Impose a	Strong	Inform about media's principle role	Adjust the internal policy of the	Raise awareness on the influence

<b>Suggestions and recommendations</b>	media and these organizations + indicate a social delegate for each media + Respect the poor and his dignity	quota for the media + specialized media	communication with the concerned ministry and organizations	in public interest and poverty cases + convince them that they have a direct interest in this + create some incentives for that	media + increase the space allocated for poverty and social issues + desist from politicizing social issues	of the governmental policy and corruption on the increasing of poverty + claim and lobby for the ministry's help + make some researches and studies that show the importance of these issues to the media + Create a monitoring
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						unit to train media workers and journalists and control media's coverage
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After collecting the questionnaire, the data shows they all agreed on the main conclusion that the Lebanese media does not cover poverty stories and that the coverage depends on media outlets' agendas and political orientation. Usually, media covers CSOs' events only when a politician or a religious figure is present. Hence, the coverage is reduced to its political aspect instead of its social importance. One of the respondents even explained that media outlets spend their funding and interest in events happening in Beirut and do not really cover what happens in rural areas.

The lack of coverage has a wide impact on CSOs activities: It weakens their possibility of making a change, obstructs their accomplishments and society's main problems as it also limits people's awareness on the social situation. In parallel, a sufficient coverage would increase volunteerism and people's donations to the organizations, raise their awareness as well in order to tackle poverty and lobby on stakeholders.

As for the recommendations, the main suggestions were creating a monitoring unit to train the media and observe their coverage, implement specialized media and raise awareness on the impact of governmental policies and corruption on the rates of poverty.

The respondents unanimously agreed that the lack of coverage makes it more difficult to find and shed light on poverty stories to be able to develop a strategy for fighting it. Furthermore, marginalizing the voice of the poor makes it harder on them to communicate with stakeholders, while ignoring poverty cases make it seem as inexistent and so social problems will increase instead of diminishing.

## **CHAPTER VI: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The most important recommendations resulting from this analytic study pertaining to covering of media of issues of poverty in rural areas and slums are as follows:

- A necessity for the allocation of the different media of more space in their newscasts to cover issues of poverty;
- Allocation of part of media follow-up for the execution phases for the National Program to Support the Poorest Families, launched on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011;
- Taking into account the diversity in the nature of issues brought up in the media and associated with poverty, without restricting them to general issues linked to poverty in general;
- Highlighting the role of women in investigative and news reports in terms of reflecting their abilities and the positive energy they have instead of representing them as victims in general;
- Shedding light on various aspects of the piece associated with poverty, including the identification of the responsible governmental sides, and listening to their responses as opposed to the complaints of people and their demands to reach a conclusion which serves the purpose of preparing a investigative report;
- Keeping clear of the element of thrill in the investigative reports should it be used only to attract viewers, and avoiding dissemination of stereotypes related to gender issues or geographic areas.

The main suggestions and recommendations proposed by CSOs and experts were as follow:

**First,** improve the communication between media outlets and CSOs by setting a social delegate.

**Second,** impose a media quota concerning poverty stories and social issues.

**Third,** implement a specialized media that collaborates with CSOs to fight poverty, serve public interest, stressing on the importance of respecting the poor, and avoid humiliating him indirectly through the coverage.

**Fourth,** create incentives to persuade the media that they have a direct interest in modifying its internal policies and increase the area of media coverage allocated for social issues, refrain from politicizing social issues, and raise awareness on the direct implications of governmental policies and corruption at high levels of poverty.

**Fifth,** CSOs should make pressure on the ministry of social affairs and the ministry of information to launch and publish researches and studies that can inform public opinion and media about the importance of these issues and create a monitoring unit to train and observe the media.



## ANNEXES

### Elaborated opinions

#### Head of Caritas Branch in Akkar, Reverend Father Michel Abboud

- First Question: Yes, media coverage of these issues is not enough and very limited.
- Second Question: Some media covered insufficiently our activities. They are the most motivated when political or religious persons are present. However, I want to shed light on NNA's constant availability and coverage.
- Third Question: The lack of coverage has a huge impact on us: When media is constantly present, volunteerism and donations will increase.
- Fourth Question: The advantage of the coverage is to indicate where there are some urgent cases to help. On the other side, the coverage might hurt the poor and humiliate him; if for example, his face is shown on TV while he does not want to. This matter needs some prudence.
- Fifth Question: Recommendations and suggestions:
  - Ensure a continuous communication between the media and these organizations
  - Indicate a social delegate for each media

It is also important that the social delegates are motivated and interested in these topics.

### World Vision International

- First Question: Yes, the media does not cover poverty because it is not a priority, unlike the political topics (Living issues do not seem this important to media).
- Second Question: The media covers our activities only when they are interested and when the event serves their “agenda”, depending on their political views too.
- Third Question: We have foreign donors, therefore, the lack of coverage does not affect our NGO’s activities directly, but it definitely influence people’s knowledge about us and weakens the cooperation.
- Fourth Question: On the first side, an excessive coverage can encourage poor to stay as they are, without willing to fight and improve their conditions while they can receive considerable help from organizations. Nevertheless, on the other side, coverage is very important to shed light on these issues in order to help them.
- Fifth Question: Imposing media quota and specialized media can be efficient in stimulating their role in covering poverty issues.

### Ms. Veronique Abou Ghazaleh, Journalist and Researcher in media and poverty

- First Question: When I finished my MA study, I became more certain about the fact that media does not consider covering developmental issues and especially poverty in Lebanon. Based on my daily job as a media worker, I agree and approve the fact that media is interested in entertainment instead of solving social and economical issues.
- Second Question: I am not a social worker in CSOs but, based on my experience in local newspapers and radio stations, I would evaluate media coverage of poverty issues in Lebanon as negative, pointing out the lack of space allowed to poverty.
- Third Question: The first influence of the lack of coverage is on the public opinion that is not aware enough and responsive with this issue. Without the awareness role that the media should play, people will not be engaged in helping to solve these problems.

- Fourth Question: Through the absence of coverage of poverty, the media becomes to the “elite” instead of being “the voice” of the marginalized categories. Consequently, poor people will feel that it is impossible to communicate with stakeholders and society is careless about them.
- Fifth Question: In order to stimulate the media, they should preserve a constant collaboration with CSOs and the ministries, especially the ministry of foreign affairs. This way, CSOs provide the media with the necessary information and in parallel; the ministry elaborates statistics and implements specific strategies to fight poverty that include the media

Dr. Georges Sadaka, Researcher and Lecturer in the journalism department in the Lebanese University

- First Question: One of the most relevant weaknesses of the Lebanese media is the huge space allocated to the political issues while the social topics are almost absent. Furthermore, the journalists that cover or report the social topics are considered as second category while those concerned in politics, are more privileged.
- Second Question: I do not have an experience with organizations but it is obvious that social issues are not present in the media’s agendas due to their funding from political parties and the need to produce materials to satisfy them, which cannot be social.
- Third Question: Society problems will be hidden if the media coverage remains weak and the process to find adequate solutions will become harder too. Therefore, media should play its developmental role and point at these cases in order to help them.
- Fourth Question: To solve any problem, first it is necessary to shed light on it. By hiding it, it will seem as inexistent and problems will increase.
- Fifth Question: I would rephrase the question this way: “What are the benefits that the media will get if they cover social issues”? Foreign media consider that covering social topics and shedding light on it is very important for public awareness. What is the position of the Lebanese media in this matter?  
Stimulation can happen either by raising awareness on the role of media or by convincing them that they have a direct interest in it.

Ms. Marie Antoinette Souaid, Head of the media unity in the Ministry of Social Affairs

Ms. Marie Antoinette informed us that the ministry's project concerning poverty is not very efficient due to the lack of funding.

- First Question: Yes, the space allocated for social issues in the media is very restricted. The weak audience that it might attract and the absence of social culture among people can explain this.
- Second Question: When a minister is present, the media covers the event from a political point of view regardless of the social aspect. The main problem remains in the media's policy and the lack of follow-up. We suggested for example to start a new TV show with LBCI but they refused because it is not a "commercial" program.
- Stimulating media to cover these issues is necessary but not enough. Media's administrations must encourage their journalists and media workers and include this topic in their internal policy.
- As for the ministry, it provides shelter to the homeless children and individuals. Moreover, the ministry developed service-learning programs, for example, implemented dispensaries, helped people learn some professions and provided custody of children. In addition, the ministry launched some strategies to fight poverty and a "poverty card" to poor people (chosen based on certain criteria) that provides them with some benefits and services.

Ms. Ghina Anani, Founder and Director of ABAAD

- First Question: Mostly, TV channels tend to tackle poverty stories in their TV shows by mentioning some specific cases but they rarely expose them in their news programs. Nevertheless, the media does not address the socio-economic policies that lead to the increasing number of poor, the coverage remains confined to individual poverty situations.
- Second Question: Due to the budget and priority accorded to the coverage, media's attention is mostly focused on the events happening in Beirut than other regions.
- Third Question: ABAAD does not work directly with poverty stories.

- Fourth Question: Media's role consists on informing public opinion, MPs and stakeholders about poverty in Lebanon. The lack of coverage marginalizes the voice of the poor.
- Fifth Question:
  - Stimulate the media to cover the social and economic issues, especially poverty and inform the public about the impact of the governmental policies and trade agreements, privatization and public corruption on the high rates of poverty.
  - CSOs should lobby on the ministry of social affairs and media outlets to gain their support.
  - Conduct research and studies explaining to the media the importance of the issues of social justice and poverty among viewers, which can also facilitate the preparation of programs and the coverage of these issues.
  - Create a monitoring unit to observe the media coverage of the issues of social justice, train the media and sensitize them on its importance.

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