



# UNITE LEBANON YOUTH PROJECT NEWSLETTER

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Making our way into 2017, we have had a very busy and fruitful few months at ULYP! Six programs have started and are underway, our reach among beneficiaries has expanded, we have fully renovated our football field, and our Bridge Program continues to expand and provide help, assistance, and support for our graduates beyond graduation.

## #RESPECT

#RESPECT empowers and enables youth ages 16-22 to engage in conflict resolution activities, and to embody and promote the values of acceptance and tolerance in their communities.

In order to sustain change and increase impact, ULYP believes in passing on the baton and giving others the tools necessary to instill change. #RESPECT, funded by the US Embassy Beirut Local Grants Program, does exactly that. In early February, the #RESPECT participants attended a Training of Trainers (ToT) focusing on creating interactive presentations that transmit messages to their peers in an interesting, creative, and informative manner.

In March, the students came up to the ULYP campus for a weekend retreat and closing ceremony. During the retreat, they refreshed the ideas that they discussed during the program, watched the videos they independently produced that carried the messages of #RESPECT, and through simulations practiced dissemination. Throughout April and May, the students will be entering schools and community centers to present their videos to the younger generations; training them on respect, equality, and acceptance - the messages that define the #RESPECT program.

We are excited to announce that #RESPECT has just kicked off the beginning of its third module! Following the opening of the first sessions, one of the students from the Dar Al Aytam Orphanage had this to say: " We have finally found people who understand and respect us fully!"



### SPRINGING INTO ACTION

*"One language sets you in a corridor for life. Two languages open every door along the way."* - Frank Smith

The third cycle of our Action for Children of Today (ACT) program, supported by HSBC - Youth Opportunities Programme, was successfully launched and is underway! 260 students, aged 9-12, from various cohorts of the population – Syrian refugees, Palestinian refugees from Lebanon and Syria, and Lebanese – have come together to attend 12 weeks of English language instruction on ULYP's Dibbiyeh campus. The holistic and interactive English classes are supported by sessions with specialists in which the students engage in conflict resolution, art-therapy, and drama workshops. Through the program and its workshops, students are supported with their English language skills whilst being given the opportunity to improve their self-confidence and understanding of others in a creative and interactive environment. The goal of this program, like all the ULYP programs, is to motivate the students, and fill the gaps in their education to stay at school and not drop out.



Also woven into the program are sessions with the students' parents. Our parents' sessions are designed to ensure the lessons and methodology of ACT are sustainable beyond the program and into the students' homes.

### HAPPY!

*"If children feel safe, they can take risks, ask questions, make mistakes, learn to trust, share their feelings, and grow."* - Alfie Kohn

The HAPPY program (Happy Alternative Program for Preschoolers and Youth) is off to a very successful start this year. 150 preschoolers and their 12 teachers have completed their sessions on ULYP's campus in Dibbiyeh. In May, the participating teachers, after having the opportunity to engage in the HAPPY methodology, will attend a one-day workshop to cement their knowledge and understand the rationale behind our approach to teaching and learning so they can continue the change in their preschools.



HAPPY considers children as active learners, and engages the students in an interactive and immersive learning experience that uses stories, songs, art, and activities indoors and outdoors to teach English, math, science, and behavioral skills. During the program, ULYP teachers witnessed increased self-confidence and rapid improvement among the children, particularly in English language and sharing skills. We are halfway through the second module with equally bright and creative students! HAPPY is part of the Support Early Childhood Education Development Program, in partnership with UNICEF and Taawon-Lebanon.

### **MATH4SUCCESS – PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING**

*“Teaching is the highest form of understanding” - Aristotle*

Math4Success is a new program guided by the principle that the best way for students to really learn something is to teach it themselves. Sixty middle school students and their four teachers have successfully completed the eight-week program, which presents the link between math and life, and reteaches main math concepts. Students learn through interactive methods that bring math to life inside and outside the classroom. They also learn how to code, and by the end of the program are able to code a game that demonstrates one of the math concepts they have learned. A peer-to-peer session requires the children to master the math concepts and develop the game with the aim of teaching it to their classmates, giving them the opportunity to lead the learning process.



We are halfway through the second module of the program with sixty new participants, which includes sessions at the ULYP campus in Dibbiyeh and the participating schools. The Math4Success program is part of Towards Inclusive Education, supported by UNICEF and in partnership with Terre des Hommes Italia. One mother whose child attends the program said that “now that I learned about your methodology, I finally understand why my child wakes up with no problem and gets ready so fast on the day he knows he has your program.”

### **SHARE**

ULYP’s SHARE (Spreading Hope And Reviving Education) program is an interactive and holistic program that targets students who are achieving particularly well at the Haifa school, an UNRWA middle school in the Chatila refugee camp. The program strengthens the English skills of these students with the aim of enabling them to obtain the tools and skills needed to progress beyond secondary education and into university.



In parallel to the English classes, SHARE offers sports and art activities to the students as well as cultural field trips. This semester, SHARE students participated in a day of science activities at ACS (American Community School at Beirut) and visited the Beirut Art Center.

We are halfway through the spring module and we are already seeing marked improvements in both the students’ level of English and in their own confidence with the language!

**RAINBOW: SHEDDING LIGHT ON PROGRESS MADE**

*"We color the world, not with the darkness of our pasts, but with the rainbow of our hope." Jenim Dibie*

We are almost half way through our RAINBOW program and are already seeing and feeling the colors of change. RAINBOW is a two-semester holistic educational program that aims to bring light and color to the lives of 180 Syrian refugee children, their parents, and their communities. The program runs in three separate locations across Lebanon: Tripoli, Beirut, and Saida, with 60 students per location. Throughout the semester, the students work with their teachers to improve their English and build their self-esteem through the gift of language. They also regularly meet with specialists on conflict resolution, art and theater therapy, and are constantly given the opportunity to engage their creativity in an interactive learning environment.

Accompanied by their teachers, the students learn about the world they live in and explore new areas on cultural field trips, such as visiting the National Museum in Beirut and the Saida castle. With parents playing an important role in growth at home, we meet and provide them with specialist sessions that empower them with knowledge and tools to best support their children and care for them.

In mid-April, the groups in Saida and Tripoli concluded the program with a celebration of their achievements. Students went home with a certificate, an English workbook to continue learning, coloring pencils, and a RAINBOW bag to carry it all in.

During the second week of June we will kick off module two and thanks to the progress made and the positive feedback from parents, teachers, and partners, we will be working with a majority of the same students to push their English learning and skills even further. In the meantime, we still have two programs running in Beirut that will come to a close at the end of May - so stay tuned to see the rainbow shine!



### RECLAIMING ONE'S OWN STORY



*"Inside each of us is a natural born storyteller just waiting to be released." - Robin Moore*

The ULYP teaching team delved into a new Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop curated by the RAWIYAT project last term. It is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) in the context of the Alumni Community Action Grant (ACAG). The grant is aimed at implementing a community-based projects where participants exercise their creativity and leadership skills to make an impact in their communities. The RAWIYAT project consists of a series of workshops designed for vulnerable young people to explore their own stories, while also learning creative methods

to curate and share these stories. By becoming rawiyat themselves (story tellers), the youth have a chance to understand their own lives, successes, and model to others the art of story telling.

Through participatory methods, the aim of the program is to create safe spaces where RAWIYAT participants gather together to explore and share their past experiences; find common ground for learning and unlearning; and gain tools to take back ownership of their story over which control is often stripped as a result of the ravages of war and forced migration. The target population for RAWIYAT is female youth from underprivileged communities.

The ULYP team was trained on ways to effectively deliver the program by Dounia Kchiere and Amardeep Kainth. They then delivered it to 15 young women ages 14-17. By the end of the program, each participant had delved into her own personal story and was able to share a carefully curated story of her choice with the rest of the group.

We look forward to future manifestations of the RAWIYAT project!



**BRIDGE****UPC 2017**

Bridge is currently preparing and organizing interviews for the University Preparatory Course (UPC) Program that will run in July and August. The Bridge Scholarship Committee will be interviewing 200 10<sup>th</sup> graders from different UNRWA schools as of the beginning of May 2017. With the cooperation of volunteers from the 'Duke Engage' program as well as university students benefitting from a scholarship from the Bridge Program, we will be able to provide 150 students with university preparation, including SAT training and university guidance this Summer.

**UPC STARS!**

Mohammad Akel, who completed the UPC course in 2015, is currently on a scholarship to complete his high school education at Unite World College (UWC) in the United Kingdom. Coming from Ain el-Hilwe camp in Saida, Mohammad managed, in a very short time-period, to adapt to a new life on campus and become one of the most involved students in extra-curricular activities. Recently, he was a speaker at the TEDxYouth@UWCAC. He used this platform to raise awareness on the state and struggle of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

Youssef Abou El Neaj, from the Bekaa region, was also a UPC student in 2014. Like Mohammad, Youssef is also on a scholarship to study at UWC in the UK. He is currently in Grade 12 and expected to graduate this year. Youssef was always known for his dedication towards education, and outstanding personality. Both factors played a role in Youssef recently receiving his acceptance letter from Harvard University!

It brings us great such joy to see our students achieve this level of success at a very young age!

**APPLICATIONS**

October 2016 witnessed the launch of the Bridge Scholarship website. Unlike in previous years, students in Grade 12 will here on apply for the Bridge Program online, which means that ULYP will reach a larger group of students living outside of Beirut as they can apply from the comfort of their home. We currently have around 250 scholarship applicants (and counting) from all over Lebanon. We expect to provide between 100 and 120 scholarships to students who will be studying at universities in Lebanon and abroad for the 2017-2018 academic year.

### JOINING FORCES: ACS AND ACT STUDENTS TEAM UP TO TAKE ON THE ALPHABET

*"Peace is not unity in similarity but unity in diversity, in the comparison and conciliation of differences."* - Mikhael Gorbatchev



Every year the American Community School at Beirut (ACS) Middle School undertakes their 'week without walls' program whereby students complete a week of community service aimed at breaking down the physical and non-physical barriers within Lebanese society. In the past, ACS students have participated in a variety of activities on ULYP's campus such as painting walls. However, this year they got involved in ULYP's ACT (Action for Children of Today) program and helped 65 ACT students with an English session.

The activity matched 1 ACS student with 1 ACT student to work together to produce a set of alphabet flashcards. The students went around campus in their pairs, finding things that begin with each letter. By the end of the session, every ACT student had a complete set of flashcards with a ring binder holding them together from A through Z. The activity ended with the students making a friendship bracelet for one another.

It was a great day of activities, in which real friendships were formed, English was learnt and barriers were broken down. A big thank you to ACS and each and every student and teacher there!



### BRIDGE ALUMNI GIVE BACK: PHYSIOTHERAPY GRADUATES INTRODUCE NEW BURJ AL BARAJNEH CLINIC

*"To care for those who once cared for us is one of the highest honors."* - Tia Walker

Three students who graduated with a B.S. in Physiotherapy from the Beirut Arab University in 2016, after having received a university scholarship from the Bridge Program, just began providing physical therapy to the elderly in a new clinic in Burj Al Barajneh refugee camp in Beirut.

Inaugurated on April 13, 2017 by Mrs Melek El Nimer, the 'ProPhysio Clinic' will serve the elderly in the Burj Al Barajneh camp. The clinic's opening was attended by members of the local community and organizations, and included an introductory presentation by Amira Dabbagh, Sahar Snounou, and Sherine Hussein, all 3 ULYP graduates. The presentation was followed by a tour to introduce the newly established facility and a lunch hosted by Social Support Society's Active Ageing House in the camp.



From left to right: Mrs Laila Orabi, Sahar Snounou, Mrs Melek El Nimer, Amira Dabbagh, Shirine Hussein and Sahar Sarhan.



Amira Dabbagh, BS Physical Therapy BAU 2016, introducing the clinic and its services.

### **OUR CAMPUS CONTINUES TO GROW AND IMPROVE**

*"When I step onto the court, I don't have to think about anything. If I have a problem off the court, I find that after I play, my mind is clearer and I can come up with a better solution. It's like therapy. It relaxes me and allows me to solve problems." - Michael Jordan*

At ULYP, we are continually improving our campus. Three major refinements were achieved this quarter:

**1. Football Field:** We have just finished fully upgrading our football field. With the generous support of the United Palestinian Appeal and other donors, we have completely relayed the turf, covered the field for protection during the hot summer months and rainy winter days, re-fenced the perimeter, and installed lighting making it a sought after and exciting prospect for our beneficiaries.

Throughout many of our programs, we weave in sports and interactive learning to aid physical and mental well-being as well as to make the lessons as interactive and engaging as possible. By improving our campus facilities like the football field, we are not only providing an attractive space to host sports programs, but also a space to host interactive lessons and a large number of activities.

Excited about the new football field, Muhannad Bustani, a 9<sup>th</sup> grade student in Math4Success, said, "The field is very nice. I love playing football, it's one of my best talents. The new field makes the experience on campus even more enjoyable."



**2. Rehabilitating ULYP's housing:** Through a generous grant from the Australian Embassy's Direct Aid Program, we have been able to upgrade the main house at the ULYP campus, namely the bedrooms, bathrooms, and laundry room. This space is used by ULYP to accommodate the children and youth who live outside the radius of one hour from the campus, which allows ULYP to serve beneficiaries from all over Lebanon who come to campus to spend overnight retreats and participate in programs. This grant enabled ULYP to purchase new bedding, sheets, towels, and pillows for the bedrooms in addition to a new laundry machine, an industrial dryer, and curtains. The main house can now provide an even more comfortable, clean, and hospitable environment for our beneficiaries and guests who rent the villa!

**3. Growing our HAPPY program:** Given the popularity and success of our HAPPY program, we have decided to build an additional pre-school room to accommodate the growing numbers. We would like to thank Give a Child a Toy who has already provided us with funding to purchase all new furniture, equipment, and learning materials for the new space!

**STUDENT SPOTLIGHT - HANAN MADJOOL, RAINBOW BEIRUT, AGE 10.**

Only a few weeks into the RAINBOW Beirut program, Hanan's mother explained to the teachers how happy Hanan and her brother were now that they are enrolled in RAINBOW. "They used to spend their mornings at home with nothing to do until school starts at 14:00. Now, they wake up excited every morning and on weekends can hardly wait for their next session of RAINBOW." Six weeks into the program her mother came by again to share the news that Hanan's grades in English have been rising with every test and quiz she takes; so much so, in fact, that her English teacher at school asked her, "Hanan, who is teaching you English, why is your level improving so drastically?" Hanan's mother expressed how thankful she is that her children now have the opportunity to learn and catch up with their education, making up for time lost leaving Syria.

**SOUAD MASSI FUNDRAISING CONCERT**

On March 5, Souad Massi and her band played in front of a packed-out Beirut Music Hall in aid of ULYP. This was the first time Souad Massi has performed to fundraise for ULYP and she did not disappoint. It was a beautiful show and fully enjoyed by everyone who attended. Our special thanks goes out to Souad Massi, and our sponsors Pillar Invest and CSC Bank SAL, and all the attendees, helping us raise over \$40,000. These generous donations will go towards ULYP's ongoing and upcoming programs and scholarships!

**SPREAD YOUR WINGS**

Looking ahead to the summer months, we will launch an exciting new program, FLY (For the Livelihood of Youth), funded by the Welfare Association in Lebanon-Taawon, that seeks to promote the employability and social cohesion of youth in Lebanon. The program primarily addresses youth unemployment and the lack of opportunity to be able to change and improve one's situation. To do so, the FLY program will tackle the skills gap that exists between recent university graduates and employer expectations by providing business, English and soft skills training, coupled with internship placements. FLY aims to equip Palestinian refugee youth with skills they need to gain a competitive edge within today's labor markets. FLY will hopefully give the participants the wings to fly past obstacles and soar toward a better and more productive life.



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