

UPAConnect

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A unique running club of diverse people, building friendships and dedicated to Palestinian education.

Iqraa means "read" in Arabic.

Running for a Brighter Palestine

www.iqraadc.org | www.helpupa.org/iqraa

Train with experienced coaches.

Run with new friends.

Raise funds for UPA's Scholarship Program!

Be a part of building an independent, sustainable Palestine by investing in the capacity of youth and supporting Palestinian institutions of higher education.

Not a runner? Make a **pledge** or **volunteer**!

Connect thru Giving

Transformative humanitarian work in Palestinian communities.

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The **UPA Connect** newsletter is published quarterly by **United Palestinian Appeal, Inc. (UPA)**. UPA was founded in 1978 as a non-profit humanitarian organization to alleviate the suffering of Palestinians, particularly those in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and refugee camps throughout the Middle East, and to contribute to the long-term socioeconomic and cultural development of Palestinian society.

"If the past is only an experience, make of the future a meaning and a vision."

-Mahmoud Darwish



UPA Connect

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Education in Palestine

As a displaced people, Palestinians value education as something that can never be taken away. Palestinian families make significant sacrifices to send their children to school. Determined youth walk around roadblocks, often at great personal risk, in search of knowledge and a brighter future.

This issue of UPA Connect features some of the many ways that UPA strengthens the education sector in Palestine. When I was in the region last month, I saw first-hand the positive impact of our work when I met many of our Children's Fund partners, including all of those mentioned on page two.

Truly, they are building a stronger, more inclusive Palestinian society by providing education to populations with not one, but multiple vulnerabilities. These are kids growing up in a context of violence who are not only living in poverty and/or as refugees, but they may also face challenges related to their disability, family environment and the social stigma they experience. **I invite you to read their stories.**

From preschool all the way through university, UPA is there and making a difference --sometimes in unexpected places. I didn't know Dr. Emad Hussein; I met him by chance while touring

2014: International Year of Solidarity With the Palestinian People

projects in the northern West Bank. Now an orthodontist who now teaches at the American University in Jenin, Dr. Hussein told me: "All that I am today started with a university scholarship from UPA. Thank you for what you did then and thank you for what you are doing now."

Actually, the thanks goes to you for sustaining the mission of UPA and believing in the future of Palestine. We will continue to invest in the education of Palestinian youth, across circumstances and abilities, for we believe everyone can play a vital role in their society. Of course, children always express it best and the words of one child I met at An Nahda Society in Ramallah have stayed close to my heart: "Get to know us. Take us seriously. Be responsible to us. Help us be safe. Think about our lives. Use your power. Make things happen."

And so we shall,

Saleem F. Zaru
Executive Director

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Children's Fund Quarterly Report: January-



Al Malath Society

Beit Sahour, West Bank

Disability rights are a human right at Al Malath where youth with severe disabilities are equipped to be active members of the Palestinian society. Services to older youth with special needs are nearly nonexistent in the West Bank, so Al Malath provides best practice therapeutic education, vocational and life skills training. In response to the immense challenge of the constant care of their loved ones, UPA funded an intensive training module for 25 caregivers. Afaf is the mother of a child with disability and the other with Down Syndrome. "I suffer with them. I must constantly protect them from the world and the people around them. After attending the caregiver training, I became more accepting of my struggles with the boys and I am now able to help them in a better way."

◀ **Opportunities for youth with severe disabilities to be in the community with their families without stigma**



An Nahda Association

Ramallah, West Bank

78 children with cognitive and development disabilities were provided transportation to attend school. Since public schools do not offer an appropriate education for children with special needs, families are dependent on private services. Providing transportation for children in rural villages and refugee camps the link between poverty, disability and social exclusion. Mervat, a special education teacher at An Nahda who accompanies the children on the bus each day, shares that the mothers and their children when the bus takes them to our center to learn in a warm and respectful environment.

◀ **Established in 1925, An Nahda has promoted social equality in Palestinian society for nearly 90 years**



SOS Children's Village

Bethlehem, West Bank

Orphaned, at-risk children from the southern West Bank receive caring residential support at SOS Children's Village. Before SOS; some have learning challenges and will not graduate without intervention. Through a new program, after three months of intense after-school tutoring, using new interactive teaching methods. Now, the children's self-confidence in these children has helped them believe in themselves. Plus, teachers are learning more effective methods to teach.

◀ **"I never liked to learn, but now the teacher is showing us that learning can be fun!"**

Continuing Projects

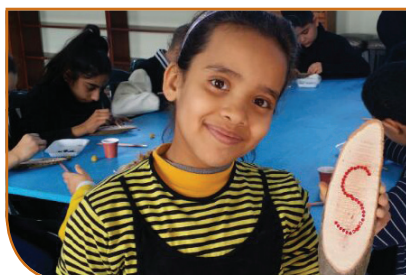


Palestine Board on Books for Young People (PBBY)

Rafah, Gaza Strip

UPA is proud to continue support to PBBY's innovative after-school programming in the southern Gaza Strip. It provides the doors of freedom to 195 children whose daily reality is one of extreme hardship and restriction. This program provides children with speech and hearing challenges in Khan Younis. As a result, their self-confidence and self-value soared.

◀ **Bibliotherapy extends to children with communication challenges in one of the most underserved areas**



Strengthening Amity with the Arts (SAWA)

Unite Lebanon Youth Project • Greater Beirut, Lebanon

SAWA uses the arts to empower marginalized youth to be positive agents of change. UPA sponsored 25 youth, including some who had recently fled Syria, to participate in last quarter's after school program. The focus was on gender equality. Several school teachers were also trained to implement the project in their home classrooms.

◀ **SAWA's conflict resolution training and self-esteem building activities made a difference for 11 years**

How your donations are used:



In 2013, 95% of UPA's operating expenses were used for programs that directly benefit Palestinian communities in need.

y-March 2014

to become valued and active participants in Bank. Al Malath targets this gap by providing the challenge that family members face in providing. "I am the mother of two boys, one with a cognitive disability and one from a society that does not always understand boys and am seeing the positive side of life." **Without experiencing social stigma.**

school at An Nahda this past quarter. Because dependent upon access to private facilities. By disability and lack of services is finally broken. Today, shares: "I see the happiness in the face of both perfectful atmosphere. Thanks to UPA!" **90 years.**

Children's Village. Many had not attended school a new partnership with UPA, 48 children received the children look forward to school. Your investment the methods which will benefit all students.

Gaza Strip. Teaching creative writing has opened this quarter, services were extended to children the soared! **served corners of the Gaza Strip.**

ered 25 Palestinian refugee children from Lebanon, The focus was the principles of human rights and the classrooms, thereby reaching hundreds more. **11 year old Farah.**

Connect Through Scholarships

UPA's Scholarship Program has assisted over 2,000 Palestinian students realize their dream of higher education at universities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Recipients are carefully chosen for their academic aptitude, financial need and a desire to give back to their community through volunteerism and community leadership. Last year, UPA awarded 40 full-degree scholarships to students studying at 10 different leading universities.

Our achievements would not have been possible without you!

Aliaa from Gaza



Four years ago, and after much hard work, I graduated with honors from the University Of Palestine with a BA in Architectural Engineering.

My sincere thanks and deepest gratitude goes to UPA for easing the burden that tuition place on my family. You supported me; and now I am working hard to support others.

Currently, I am an assistant lecturer at two different universities in Gaza, as well as an academic advisor.

I have become a leader. And, in the process, I have learned to listen, compromise and empathize with my students. I am inspiring them to believe in themselves!

I will continue to give back to my homeland by preparing the next generation. Palestine needs Palestinian-led development. And I want to oversee a comprehensive process that considers Palestinian cultural, social, and environmental factors in our future planning and architectural design.

Thaer from Ramallah



It's been almost a year since I graduated from Al-Quds University Medical School as a medical doctor (MD).

Since graduation, I have been doing my medical internship at the Palestine Medical Complex (PMC) in Ramallah. Soon I will finish and receive my medical license.

I'm very thankful for the financial and moral support that UPA gave to me. It helped me finish my studies in spite of the dire political and economic difficulties that we, Palestinians, face every day.

Please continue this support to other students in Palestine, an occupied country in need. We want to live as do people, in other countries. We can provide good health and health services to our people. We just need the chance.