

UPAconnect

Issue 10 • Spring 2016



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UPA United Palestinian Appeal
—Transforming lives, empowering communities since 1978—



Letter from the Executive Director

What is the value of relief without dignity?

Dear Friend of UPA,

Take a moment to put yourself in the shoes of someone the U.S. media almost never covers: a single mother in Gaza. Your husband died during the summer 2014 war. You have struggled to support children on your own for the last two years, under constant threat of Israeli bombs or other violence.

Fortunately, several people and organizations in Gaza work to help you with the challenges you face. But relief often comes with a cost, one that goes unacknowledged: You know what your family needs, but those who try to help you only know what they are able to provide.

As a child growing up in Palestine, I saw the stream of donated clothing flood the “charity markets,” as more fortunate people got rid of their unwanted clothes. Hundreds of people benefited and were forever grateful, as a perfect fit or style were not a priority. But at what cost to human dignity?

Today, seeing those efforts from the “other side,” I struggle with the philosophical, moral and ethical questions prompted by providing “relief” to Palestinian communities. **How can we address immediate needs without compromising the dignity of the recipients?**

For single mothers in Gaza, the burden of providing for a family can be overwhelming. Towards the end of 2015, an assessment by our Gaza staff pointed to the desperate need for winter clothing among impoverished female-headed households.

UPA’s program coordinator, Abdalla, stressed the importance of giving with dignity: **“Don’t just hand it to them. Let them go to a store and choose what they want.”** And that made all the difference.

Manal Alaqra, who lives with four children in Khan Younis, told our staff, **“Due to the poor economic situation, I was unable to buy winter clothes last year. If it wasn’t for this initiative I would not have seen such joy on my daughter’s face.”** (pictured above)



Reading those words touched me and made me think that with some creativity and a little extra effort, it is possible to provide “relief with dignity.”

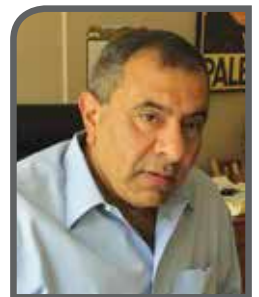
Helping Palestinian families without diminishing their dignity is also a central tenet of our Food Security Program, which is the focus of our next fundraising campaign.

Living as a Palestinian in poverty, under occupation or as a refugee in exile can be dehumanizing. Can you help us provide relief with dignity to Palestinian families in need by making a tax-deductible donation to UPA today? Your donation of **\$35, \$50, \$100, \$250** or any amount will ensure that our relief efforts continue to be an uplifting, life-affirming experience for the families we reach.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Saleem F. Zaru". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Saleem F. Zaru
Executive Director



[January – March 2016]

Social Support Society, Lebanon

The Active Aging House of Social Support Society brings old and young Palestinian refugees in Lebanon together to preserve traditional Palestinian cooking and culture, but more importantly, to support their livelihood. The **30** participating youth from Nahr el-Bared camp had dropped out of school due to economic hardship. The **30** elderly Palestinians, from Nahr el-Bared and Burj Barajneh camps, were also in need of income and food for themselves and their families.



Together, they lift each other's spirits as they grow and harvest fruits and vegetables. The participants learn how to make jams, how to pickle the produce and how to make juice. They then sold their products to households and small shops in their camp communities.

"Cooperation between the young and elderly helps preserve Palestinian culture in Lebanon and bridges generation gaps," reported a SSS staff member to UPA.



Palestine Youth Volunteer Center, Gaza

PYVC, located in Gaza, distributed **37** food baskets to help severely impoverished families survive the winter. To meet the needs of every household, PYVC consulted nutritionists and experts to help compile a food basket that would be appropriate for those suffering from diseases such as anemia. Some of the items included in the basket were eggs, chicken, canned meat, olive oil, legumes, dried fruit, sesame paste, cheeses and nuts.



PYVC chose beneficiaries based on median income, number of family members and the working status or source of income of the head-of-household.

The ongoing economic siege in Gaza has not only affected people's incomes but also negatively influences Palestinians' health and contributes to the increase and worsening of various diseases among young and old alike.



Quarterly Projects Update [January – March 2016] continued



Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center, West Bank

Palestinians with disabilities are significantly marginalized from society. Located in Ramallah, SMRC helps physically and intellectually disabled children master daily life skills and become more independent. Centers like SMRC are devoted to building their children's strength, if they have a physical disability, and helping them integrate into society. The center also conducts home visits to teach parents how to do rehabilitation exercises with their child.

With a grant from the UPA Children's Program, SMRC's Physiotherapy Program provided therapy sessions for impoverished children. Mohammad (pictured above), nine years old, was one of 44 children benefitting from this support. Mohammad, who has cerebral palsy, has been unable to sit up on his own. The therapy sessions he received through SMRC have improved his mobility, allowing him to move on his own without falling down.



Choosing coats for winter

UPA's Gaza Winterization Project reached over **300 families** – **over 1,500 individuals** – in the northern, central and southern areas of the Gaza Strip. UPA partnered with four local Palestinian organizations: Palestine Youth Volunteer Center, Palestinian Wefaq Association, Fares Al Arab for Development & Charity Works and Bayader for Environment & Development Association.

Ashraf, from Jabalia camp, received coats for his seven children. Ashraf has been unemployed for seven years. ***"Our conditions are very difficult, especially during the cold winter,"*** he said.

The unstable Gaza economy takes a toll on all individuals, young and old alike. Nermin, who works as a blacksmith, is struggling to support her children. Her eldest daughter also works to help keep the family afloat. With the rate of





Winter in Gaza

unemployment among Gaza youth at **60%**, young adults are finding it difficult to find jobs to support their families.

Adel exclaimed to the staff with a big sigh of relief, ***"Thank God...you came at the appropriate time for us."*** Adel has been weary in his struggle to support his family and two children who are suffering from chronic diseases.

In addition to distributing clothing to families, Fares Al Arab conducted a campaign to promote awareness about diseases commonly transmitted during winter season, and helping parents to be able to address weak immune systems and malnutrition during winter.

The project aimed to take the financial burden off Gazan families who would otherwise not have been able to provide warm clothing for family members and children. Parents like

Ashraf, Nermin and Adel are too often faced with difficult choices – food, medicine, or warm clothing? – often one at the expense of another.



What's New in UPA's Programs



Providing unemployed youth in Gaza with sustainable income

This UPA pilot program in Gaza focuses on the trauma caused by war and devastation. As a school-based program, it will enable mental health practitioners to assess the level of trauma among kindergarten children, as well as provide their families, teachers and caregivers with the awareness needed to understand and address the symptoms of trauma.

Our goal is to integrate a customized **Healing Through Feeling** curriculum into **470** kindergartens in Gaza, improving the lives of **50,000 children** (ages 4-7) and their families through various age-appropriate therapies (art, cognitive-behavioral and play therapy).

Beyond building awareness of trauma, and identifying children who need treatment, UPA is investing in Gaza's mental health professionals by providing them with cutting-edge trauma and counseling education and ongoing professional support. The knowledge the practitioners pass on to Gaza's teachers and parents will equip thousands of adults with the tools and information they need to recognize symptoms of trauma in themselves and their children. Finally, the program will break down taboos surrounding mental health in Palestinian society so the impact of trauma can be addressed in a constructive way, instead of being ignored and allowed to fester.

Last year, UPA launched a new initiative in Gaza to address the high rate of youth unemployment. Thanks to the support of donors like you, UPA provided **30** youth who are heads-of-households each with **business training**, a **\$200 start-up loan** and a **customized mobile cart** to sell their product (ranging from food and hot drinks to clothing and accessories). UPA is pleased to announce that the participants have fulfilled their interest-free loans with a zero-default rate.

"With this cart, I can have a sustainable income that can support my family, and I can pay the rent of my house," said Ahmed. Ahmed, 24 years old, is married with two children. He had been unemployed before participating in this project, which came at an opportune time when he was searching for employment. He is now able to provide a stable income selling a variety of products.





EMBRACING LIFE PROJECT

Making the Middle East Craniofacial Care Institute a Reality



UPA has completed the construction of the **Embracing Life Project** Surgery Center at Al-Sheikh Zayed Hospital in Ramallah, West Bank. Over **250 Palestinian children** have since been able to receive life-changing surgery to treat their cleft lip and/or palate. We are now looking to Gaza to open the second surgery center at Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza City.

The Project trains local Palestinian surgeons to perform the surgeries that have traditionally been performed by international medical delegations.

The UPA Project also ensures comprehensive pre- and post-operation attention and care for patients. Palestinian mothers can receive instruction in how to feed their newborns who suffer from a cleft lip or palate with special feeding bottles and methods, and how to care for their children after the operation. The **Embracing Life Project** also provides orthodontic care and speech therapy. UPA is proud to be able to provide such a comprehensive and specialized medical service that will also be a permanent fixture in the Palestinian health scene.

Run for a Brighter Palestine



Live in the DC, MD, VA area?
Interested in training for a
5K, 10k, half-marathon or
marathon?

Since 2008, Team Iqraa has trained over
140 runners, and has raised over \$188,000 for
UPA's University Scholarship Program.

For more information, contact Kirk Campbell:
kirkcruachan@yahoo.com



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Join the Circle of Hope!

Through UPA's monthly-giving program, you can become a sustaining supporter of UPA's work to alleviate the suffering of Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon and Jordan.

\$10 per month

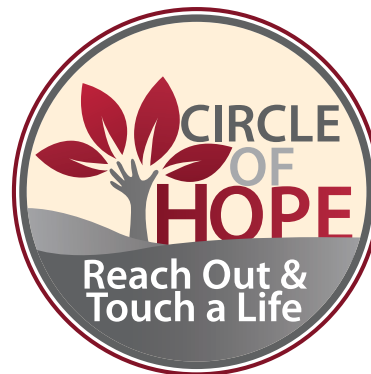
*will provide 3 Palestinian children with art, music & theater activities **OR** supplement 1 person's diet for 1 month.*

\$25 per month

*will provide daily hot meals for 1 Palestinian child **OR** enable 3 children to be part of the Healing Through Feeling Program (Healing Emotional Wounds in Gaza) for 1 month.*

\$100 per month

will provide a university scholarship for one student studying at a Palestinian university.

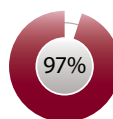


• **By Mail:** Fill out the enclosed envelope with your credit card information, amount, and check, "Monthly."

• **Online:** helpupa.org/hope

• **By Phone:** 855-659-5007, ext. 202

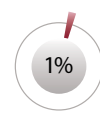
In 2015, 97% of UPA's operating expenses went to programs that directly benefited Palestinian communities in need.



Programs



Management



Fundraising

UPA is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Contributions are tax-deductible according to applicable laws.



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