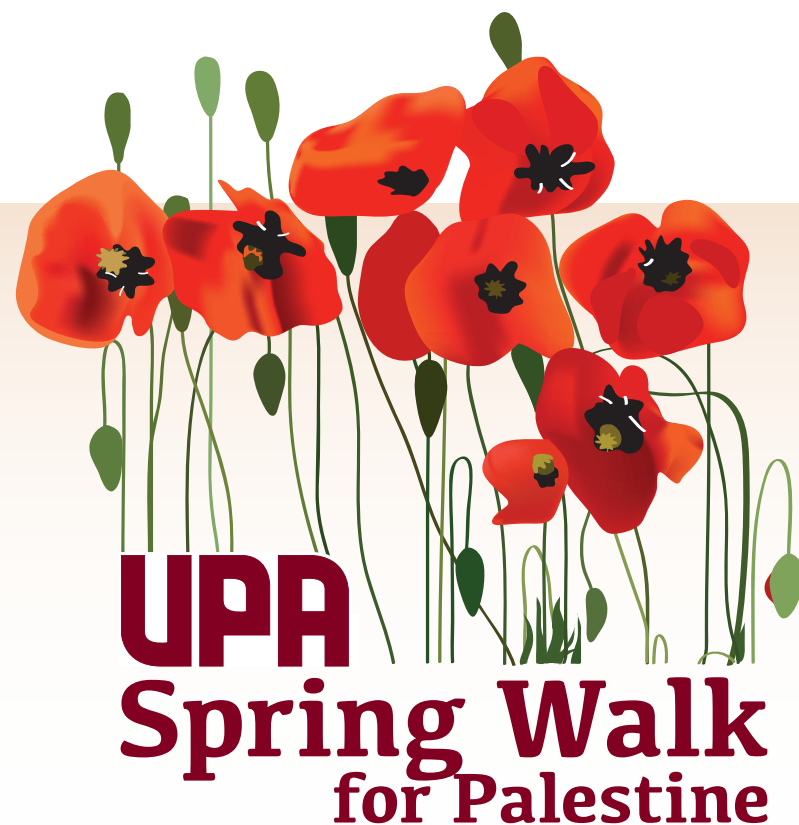


# UPA Connect

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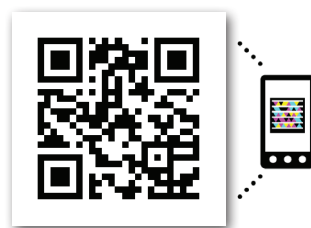
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"If the past is only an experience, make of the future a meaning and a vision."

-Mahmoud Darwish



# UPA Connect

Issue I • Winter 2014

2014: International Year of Solidarity With the Palestinian People

## Outlook for 2014

Welcome to the first issue of UPA Connect!

The vision for this quarterly communication is to connect you more closely to UPA's transformative humanitarian work in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and in Palestinian refugee camps throughout the region.

I am grateful for your generosity and compassion in 2013, our 35th anniversary year. Together we were able to meet critical needs in some of the most underserved Palestinian communities and at an unprecedented level.

Even more meaningful work lies ahead! In addition to UPA's ongoing programs related to children, emergency relief, food, micro-finance, university scholarships and sustainable agriculture, I am excited to tell you about two new priority areas.

In 2014, UPA will reach out to vulnerable Palestinian communities in the old city of Acre. Through UPA's Micro-Finance Program, ancestral homes in dire-need of renovation will be rehabilitated by providing interest free loans to female-headed households. By doing so, these women and their families will be able to stay in their homes and stay out of poverty.

Secondly, UPA will launch a new primary care program in response to gaps in health care, starting with the remote area of the Jordan Valley. Here, farming families and herding communities are often left without basic health services, including pre and post natal care. The second project in this new program will be in partnership with Aida refugee camp in the Bethlehem district. Although this camp was established shortly after 1948, it lacks health services to this day. The time to change this reality is now.

Such transformative humanitarian work can move whole communities to independence, and assist individuals to live in health and dignity. It is a path that connects to a more sustainable and vibrant Palestine.

Looking forward,

Saleem F. Zaru  
Executive Director

## Inside:

- Children's Fund Quarterly Report
- UPA Partners in Lebanon

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.

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# Children's Fund Quarterly Report: October-December 2013



Ahmed enjoys a meal at A'mari Play Center where quality early childhood education has been offered to residents of the camp since 1974.

## A'mari Play Center

### A'mari Refugee Camp, Ramallah District, West Bank

Forty economically marginalized preschool children in A'mari refugee camp at-risk for under-nutrition, received comprehensive health support this past quarter. Every day the play center provided a healthy mid-morning snack which included milk and then a high protein, hot lunch with fresh vegetables and fruit. In cooperation with UNWRA, each child was tested for anemia and other nutritional deficiencies. Interactive lessons on basic nutrition and healthy eating habits were also taught.



The YWCA continuously updates its teaching methods to offer the most developmentally appropriate education, regardless of economic background.

## YWCA Preschool

### Jalazone Refugee Camp, Ramallah District, West Bank

Because early childhood education programs are crucial to the development of a child, the YWCA operates a comprehensive preschool program in the Jalazone Refugee Camp which benefits 80 children and their families. Its cornerstone "Learning through Play" program features imagination, art, nature and language/spatial learning centers. Renovation to their facility was made possible through a UPA grant. As a result, the building was made warmer prior to the bitter cold winter weather that recently hit the region. Also, classroom technology was updated to enhance the learning process.



PBBY has established libraries in Rafah and Beit Hanoun, breathing new life into isolated communities.

## Palestine Board on Books for Young People (PBBY)

### Shawka Library, Rafah, Gaza

The Shawka Library is breathing new life into an isolated and impoverished corner of the Gaza Strip through the 180 children who recently participated in its new programs. The prolonged siege on the Gaza Strip has been devastating to children's education and development, while the Shawka area of Rafah is particularly exposed to such hardships as house demolitions, land mines and electricity shortages. It is within this context that the library has become a positive centerpiece of daily life. A safe place where children can grow and begin to rid themselves of their fear and feelings of helplessness. A culture of reading has been cultivated: parents and children alike borrow books; children write and illustrate their own stories; and an adjacent vacant lot has been turned into a playground to play games related to reading.



On average, 1,000 youth between the ages of 5-15 years benefit annually from ULYP's creative programs which promote artistic collaboration, respect and teamwork.

## Strengthening Amity with the Arts (SAWA)

### Unite Lebanon Youth Project (ULYP), Saida, Lebanon

This past quarter, UPA sponsored 25 Palestinian refugee youth to participate in ULYP's SAWA program. SAWA uses creative and performing arts as a means to explore self-identity and dialogue between Palestinian refugee and marginalized Lebanese children. Both groups have limited access to extra-curricular activities, particularly the arts, which are often neglected by schools due to lack of funding. Critical thinking and peace-building skills were developed within an atmosphere of teamwork and respect. The children, aged 12-15 years, left empowered to be positive agents of change. To ensure carry-over, two of the children's classroom teachers were offered training to implement similar projects in their home schools.

## Connect to UPA Partners

### Social Support Society & Unite Lebanon Youth Project

The founder of two of UPA's newest partners, Melek Nimer, visited our DC office this past fall.

The Social Support Society was established seven years ago in response to a study that found the elderly to be one of the most marginalized and underserved groups within Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. Its core mission is to meet the basic health, nutrition and social needs of Palestinian senior citizens through Active Ageing Houses in Burj Burjaneh and Nahr el Bared camps. Since its founding in 2006, programming has expanded to include inter-generational gatherings with the aim of increasing the social status of seniors and to pass along Palestinian cultural heritage to the younger generations.

Last year, the UPA Food Program proudly supported the Active Aging House in Nahr el Bared camp maintain a community garden, nutritional health and daily meal program. This program has profoundly improved the lives of hundreds. Cultivating land, health and hope.

Additionally, Ms. Nimer oversees an array of inspiring, art-focused youth projects at Unite Lebanon Youth Project, including SAWA (see Children's Fund Report, left). With such a heavy work load and in such harsh conditions, UPA asked Ms. Nimer what motivates her to keep going.

*"It was my father-in-law who first took me to see the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. We went first to Burj Barajneh. There was such hopelessness. Once I saw the reality of life in the camps, I had no choice but to respond. It is the hopeless that we are trying to change. Just one scholarship, one program can change an entire family. There absolutely is a ripple effect. I have seen so much need in the last seven years. And so much good will. I cannot stop!"*

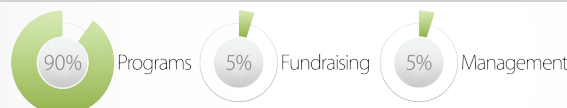


UPA's Executive Director, Saleem Zaru, meets with Melek Nimer

## About the Fund

The UPA Children's Fund touches the lives of Palestinian children every day of the year. The Fund fosters the potential of children in Palestine's most vulnerable communities, with a special focus on children with disabilities, orphaned and/or living in extreme poverty. Quarterly grants are awarded to outstanding local partners specialized in children's education and health.

### How your donations are used:



In 2012, 90% of UPA's operating expenses were used for programs that directly benefit Palestinian communities in need.

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socialsupport society

