

UPAconnect

Issue 12 • Fall 2016



In This Issue:

- Providing free health care in Gaza
- Reflections from the field – Jerash Camp, Jordan
- Meet some of our scholarship recipients

and more...

UPA United Palestinian Appeal
Transforming lives, empowering communities since 1978



Letter from the Executive Director

"The seeds of hope bear fruit"

Dear Friend of UPA,

The trip from Beirut to Tripoli was a two-hour, 50-mile drive via a scenic coastal highway along the Mediterranean seashore. I had spent the last four days with my new friend Abu Karim, a Lebanese driver from the mountain village of Aramoun, southeast of Beirut. Abu Karim was a delightful man. About my age, we had a lot to talk about, especially the different events that have significantly shaped the Arab world in the last 50 years. Although well-travelled, Abu Karim admitted, *"I have never set foot in a Palestinian refugee camp."*

For many Lebanese, the Palestinian presence in Lebanon is seen as a catalyst for the civil unrest in the early seventies and ultimately a factor contributing to the civil war in Lebanon. In a country based on a sectarian political system Palestinian presence is perceived as a threat to stability. Officially, 450,000 Palestinian refugees are registered with UNRWA in Lebanon, half of whom live in one of twelve refugee camps. Despite the slow loosening of laws governing which professions they can take in the country, Palestinians refugees continue to concentrate in informal, short-term and low-paid work, confining many to a life of poverty.

Ten miles north of Tripoli we approached Nahr el-Bared Palestinian refugee camp. The camp was established in 1948 by the Red Cross along the Mediterranean to accommodate Palestinian refugees suffering from harsh winter conditions. Named after the river that runs south of the camp, Nahr el-Bared was completely destroyed in the summer of 2007 during extended violence in Lebanon, and the camp's 27,000 Palestinian residents were forced to flee and eventually built temporary shelter in areas adjacent to the camp.

Stories of repeated displacement are not uncommon in Palestinian history and the tragedy continues.

At the camp we visited one of UPA's Food Security Program projects. Over the last 3 years, UPA has been making a conscious effort to redefine and restructure its food security program to have an increased focus on the idea of food production rather than the more common relief initiatives such as distribution of food packages. The concept of community gardens is one that lends itself to such an idea, and our partner Social Support Society in Lebanon has taken this to a level of excellence.

Social Support Society runs two elderly centers in Nahr el-Bared and Burj el-Barajneh refugee camps. In the community garden at Nahr el-Bared (the Green Land Project) participants of this center engage in cultivating and harvesting fruits and vegetables for daily consumption, and preserving excess product for sale. The project also engages unemployed youth which helps strengthen their ties to the older generation. This interaction between the youth and the elderly allows Palestinian refugee youth to learn the oral Palestinian narrative from their elders and promotes their sense of community and belonging.

After enjoying a magnificent lunch produced and prepared by the members of the center, and later a superb performance of Palestinian folk songs Abu Karim and I headed back towards Beirut.

"This was an overwhelming experience" announced Abu Karim. *"Thank you for this opportunity to experience life in a Palestinian refugee camp. I am honored and touched by the generosity and kindness."*

In the midst of chaos, poverty and misery there stands an oasis of hard work, positive energy and productivity; an oasis where the seeds of hope have given fruit!

Sincerely,



Saleem F. Zaru
Executive Director



What's New in UPA's Programs



EMBRACING LIFE PROJECT

Making the Middle East Craniofacial Care Institute a Reality

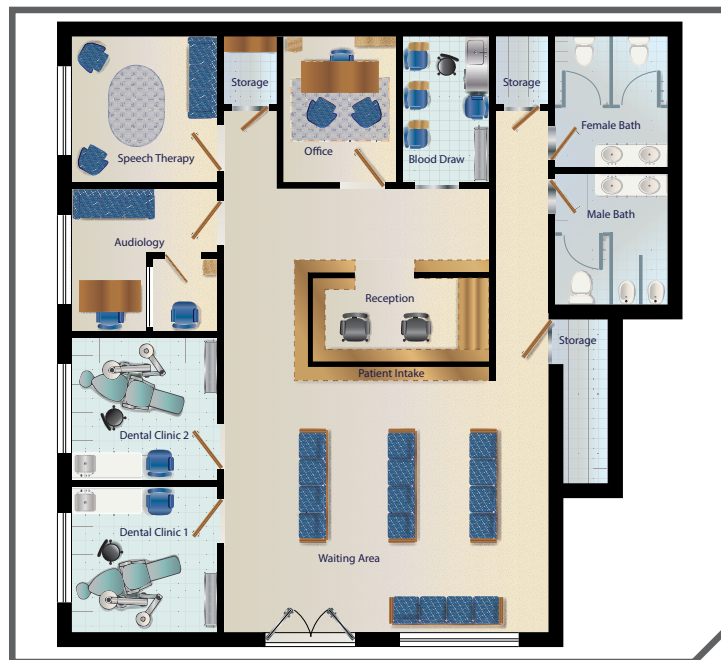
The **Embracing Life Project (ELP)** empowers Palestinians to provide self-sufficient, comprehensive care for cleft lips and palates, and other craniofacial anomalies. In addition to providing patients with the best medical treatment available, ELP also ensures that each individual family's needs are met.

The next **Embracing Life** Delegation is planned for October 2016, and is led by Dr. John van Aalst, supported by his Palestinian and American colleagues. Training delegations are a critical component of the Project in order to provide the specialized medical training needed to carry on this highly specialized medical care.

Surgeries for cleft lip and palate, and other craniofacial anomalies, will take place in UPA's new **ELP** surgery center in Ramallah, as well as in Beit Jala Hospital.

The delegation will coincide with the grand opening of the **ELP** surgery center at the Palestine Medical Complex in Ramallah. Coinciding with the timing of the delegation is a UPA-organized medical conference in affiliation with the Palestinian Ministry of Health focusing on *"Safe, Early Care of Children with Cleft and Craniofacial Conditions."*

Preparations for the **ELP** center in Gaza are well underway in partnership with Al-Ahli Al-Arabi Hospital. Construction is scheduled to start by late November of this year. An old abandoned building has been designated by the hospital for UPA's use for the supporting specialties of ELP as well as an existing operating room.



University Scholarship Program

Meet Some of UPA's University Scholarship Recipients

UPA would like to welcome the new incoming freshman students joining the UPA University Scholarship Program this fall, as well as our returning students. Participating in the program are 9 universities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Scholarships covering a large portion of a student's tuition are awarded based on financial need and academic merit.

By **giving the gift that cannot be demolished, confiscated or occupied**, your support of higher education is critical for the health and strength of Palestinian society as it strives toward a brighter future.



"I am so grateful to UPA and its service to our people. You give me hope and encouragement to complete my education."

Rasha, University College of Applied Sciences, Anesthesia Nursing, Gaza



"I am from Ein Alsultan camp near Jericho where my family has a farm. This scholarship allows me to receive a university education so I can support my family." Mahmoud, 22, An Najah University, Nablus



"I love studying archaeology, and hope to find a good job in this field in Palestine. My parents are very proud that I got this scholarship." Shoroq, 20, Dar Al-Kalima University College of Arts and Culture, Bethlehem



UPA scholarship recipients on the campus of Al Quds University, East Jerusalem.



"I am studying Business and Economics and I hope to find a secure job in a trading company. I am also interested in Arabic/English translation. Thank you to UPA for giving me an opportunity to succeed." Ronza, 21, Birzeit University, Birzeit



"This scholarship relieves my family from a heavy burden. In the beginning my mother sold her gold jewelry and asked friends for help. Now, I have this support from UPA, and one day I will be able to support my family." Mahmoud, 21, University College of Applied Sciences, Information Security Engineering, Gaza



"Thank you so much for helping me and making it possible for me to continue my studies. Your support motivates me to work hard, get high grades and hopefully support others one day." Ahlam, 22, Al Quds University, East Jerusalem



"I am from a modest family from a village called Aboud. I am very grateful for the support I am receiving from UPA to study Accounting. Hopefully this will give me a brighter future." Issa, 21, Birzeit University, Birzeit



"I am happy to study jewelry making at Dar Al Kalima. It has always been my hobby, UPA helped me make it a profession. My training will help me participate in expanding my family business." Yazan, 22, Dar Al-Kalima University College of Arts and Culture, Bethlehem



"I am from Jericho, and now completing my degree in Nursing, specializing in child and maternal health. Thank you UPA for making it possible for me to obtain this degree, and to realize my professional goals." Alaa, 21, An Najah University, Nablus

Children's Program

A.M. Qattan Foundation

Thanks to your generosity, the UPA Children's Program has committed a full year of support for Qattan's expansion of its educational programs to Gaza's marginalized and hardest hit neighborhoods following the 2008-2009, and 2014 wars. This effort has provided thousands of children the opportunity to enhance their creative side, and to strengthen their social and emotional well-being.



"When I read, I feel I'm traveling into new spaces and places."
Salsabeel 11, Al Zaytoun neighborhood



"I'm lucky to participate in these activities. I love reading, singing, drawing, and acting. My 5 brothers join me at the center and when we go home, we try to practice what we learned. I just hope the war will end one day." Fadi, 13, Khan Younis

Primary Care Clinics

Near East Council of Churches

The ongoing siege on Gaza continues to worsen the health situation among its population. With thousands of Palestinians still displaced from their homes due to the 2014 war, susceptibility to disease increases. Marginalized Palestinians in Gaza are suffering from, or are prone to food insecurity, malnutrition, communicable diseases, and psychosocial stress.

UPA is honored to continue its partnership with the **Near East Council of Churches (NECC)** in the Gaza Strip as part of UPA's primary care clinics program. NECC provides free health care to marginalized families and communities, especially women and children living in Shijaia, Darraj and Rafah. In addition to general medical services, the NECC focuses on prenatal and postnatal care, including home visits. The NECC program also addresses nutrition, malnutrition and anemia, dental care, family planning and psychosocial support.

Within a three-month period, about **11,000** children under 6 years old, **2,500** expecting mothers and over **2,000** regular patients received medical attention and treatment from NECC.

With the highest unemployment rate in the world in Gaza at **43.9%**, NECC's services are life-saving for the families that otherwise would be incapable of receiving the health care they need.



Reflections from the Field

Jerash Camp – Jerash, Jordan

Established by refugees fleeing Gaza after 1967 War, Jerash Camp (Gaza Camp) is the most impoverished refugee camp in Jordan. Over half of its 30,000 residents have an average income below the national poverty line of \$3.15/day.

Tanya Mango, UPA's Jordan Coordinator (volunteer) describes images of the camp:

"narrow dirt alleys - humid mudhouses with little or no lighting - a 90-year-old woman unable to walk, see or hear, rests on a dirt floor - sick children run barefoot in dirty alleys - some fall, their wounds go unattended."

There is no substantial medical care. Gaza refugees are without a citizenship, an ID, a work permit or a passport, and that makes public services very hard to come by.

When asked what motivates her to continue to volunteer,

Tanya responded, *"the more I get involved, the more I learn about the critical needs, and that's what compels me to keep going."*

UPA's activities in Gaza Camp recently included the distribution of family vouchers for food and supplies. UPA also continues to work with the Community Rehabilitation Center for the Disabled to provide ongoing training for their staff as well as support for physically and mentally disabled children in the camp and surrounding villages.

Despite the poverty and misery, the generosity and hospitality of the residents is overwhelming. It is not uncommon for a visitor in the camp to be invited for a home-cooked meal by one of the families. They have nothing, yet they give of themselves everything they can.



Tanya Mango visits an elderly camp resident



United Palestinian Appeal

1330 New Hampshire Ave NW
Suite 104
Washington, DC 20036 U.S.A.

Non-Profit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Jacksonville, FL
Permit No. 34

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

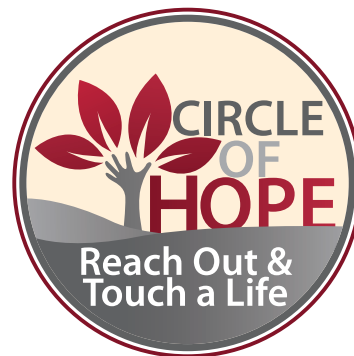
Will provide 3 children with art, music & theater activities OR supplement 1 person's diet.

\$25 per month

Will provide daily hot meals for 1 child OR enable 3 children to be part of the Healing Through Feeling Program.

\$100 per month

Will help a student attend university in the West Bank or Gaza.

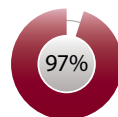


• **By Mail:** Fill out the enclosed envelope with your credit card information, amount, and check, "Monthly."

• **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.



Like UPA

Follow @UPAconnect

www.helpupa.org
contact@helpupa.org
Tel: 855-659-5007