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

Iqraa means “read” in Arabic.

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“If the past is only an experience, make of the future a meaning and a vision.”
-Mahmoud Darwish

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 are 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 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

Inside:
- Children’s Fund Quarterly Report
- UPA Scholarships Program

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How your donations are used: 95% Programs, 2% Fundraising, 3% Management

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

Children’s Fund Quarterly Report: January-March 2014

Al Malath Society
Beit Sahour, West Bank
Disability rights are a human right at Al Malath where youth with severe disabilities are equipped to become valuable members of Palestinian society. Services to older youth with special needs are nearly nonexistent in the West Bank. Best practice therapeutic education, vocational and life skills training. In response to the immense challenge of constant care of their loved ones, UPA funded an intensive training module for 25 caregivers. Afaf is the mother of two boys, one with Down Syndrome, the other with a disability. She says, “I suffer with them. I must constantly protect them from the society that does not always understand them.” After attending the caregiver training, I became more accepting of my struggles with the boys and am seeing the positive side of life.

An Nahda Association
Ramallah, West Bank
78 children with cognitive and development disabilities were provided transportation to attend school at An Nahda this past quarter. Public schools do not offer an appropriate education for children with special needs, families are dependent on private facilities for their educational needs. By providing transportation for children in rural villages and refugee camps the link between poverty, disability, and lack of services is finally broken. Mervat, a special education teacher at An Nahda who accompanies the children on the bus each day, says, “I see the happiness in the face of both the mothers and their children when the bus takes them to our center to learn in a warm and respectful atmosphere.”

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. Many had not attended school before SOS; some have learning challenges and will not graduate without intervention. Through a new partnership with UPA, 48 children received three months of intense after-school tutoring, using new interactive teaching methods. Now, the children look forward to school. Your investment in these children has helped them believe in themselves. Plus, teachers are learning more effective methods.

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. Teaching creative writing has opened doors of freedom to 195 children whose daily reality is one of extreme hardship and restriction. This quarter, services were extended to children with speech and hearing challenges in Khan Younis. As a result, their self-confidence and self-value soared.

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 Palestinian refugee children from Lebanon, including some who had recently fled Syria, to participate in last quarter’s after school program. The focus was the principles of human rights and gender equality. Several school teachers were also trained to implement the project in their home classrooms, thereby reaching hundreds more.

Continuing Projects

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

“I never liked to learn, but now the teacher is showing us that learning can be fun!”

Bibliotherapy extends to children with communication challenges in one of the most underserved corners of the Gaza Strip.

SAWA’s conflict resolution training and self-esteem building activities made a difference for 11 year old Farah.
Children's Fund Quarterly Report:

SAWA’s conflict resolution training and self-esteem building activities made a difference for 11 year old Farah.

Unite Lebanon Youth Project  •  Greater Beirut, Lebanon

Strengthening Amity with the Arts (SAWA)

“I never liked to learn, but now the teacher is showing us that learning can be fun!”

In these children has helped them believe in themselves. Plus, teachers are learning more effective methods which will benefit all students.

Three months of intense after-school tutoring, using new interactive teaching methods. Now, the children look forward to school. Your investment before SOS; some have learning challenges and will not graduate without intervention. Through a new partnership with UPA, 48 children received

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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.

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.

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.

Thaer from Ramallah

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.

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