

PALESTINIAN YOUTH IN FOCUS

News from DRC's Ein el-Helweh Project



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Local NGO Tadamoun supports more than 140 at risk students & school drop outs weekly.

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Childhood dreams become reality. Read how DRC is helping Mahmoud open his own workshop.

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Discover the real impact of vocational training - a nursing student, his mother & our NGO partner speak out.

Education and Economics in EHC

"It's the best weapon we have. It's our chance. It's how we are going to change our lives."

These words reflect the mindset of teachers, students, parents and young entrepreneurs alike in Ein el-Helweh (EHC), the largest Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon. Their message is clear and unanimous – access to educational and economic opportunities will bring them one step closer to a brighter and sustainable future.

However, in an environment where unemployment and underemployment are widespread, particularly among youth, school drop-out rates are high and low school performance is a serious problem, access to quality education and income generation support is scarce and very much in demand.

To address this situation, the Danish Refugee Council is implementing a programme in Ein el-Hilweh camp (EHC) to increase educational and income generation opportunities for youth by improving current service

provision or responding to identified gaps. The project seeks to add value to existing services through capacity-building, technical and financial support and improved coordination and referral mechanisms.

The three-year programme, supported by the British Government, will invest in more than 1,000 youth through local NGO implementing partners.

In the livelihoods sphere, 450 youth and 180 small businesses are targeted for support ranging from start-up equipment and materials, business management training, one-on-one business support and advice, vocational training and job counselling and placement. A focus on filling market needs is expected to create sustainable incomes and instil hope in their futures.

Challenges in education are equally enormous. DRC and its partners will assist 500 young people, including school drop-outs,



students at risk of dropping out and graduates seeking higher-level education. Remedial and literacy classes, complemented by ongoing collaboration with parents and the UNRWA schools, are integral elements of DRC's holistic approach to education support.

In a strategic move, the project will also extend beyond grassroots implementation of activities and incorporate advocacy and liaison activities with local Lebanese business leaders and the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC) in an attempt to increase awareness of the benefits and impediments to Palestinian participation in the Lebanese economy.

The project is expected to run until April 2011.



OUR PARTNER: Tadamoun

*Officially known as,
Solidarity Association for
Social & Cultural
Development*

Project Coordinator of local NGO, Tadamoun, Ibtisam Abo Salem has a simple vision. "We want children to experience the joy of learning", she says.

Tadamoun is one of four NGOs currently working with DRC to support a total of 37 school drop-outs and over 300 students at risk of dropping out of school in EHC.

From the corridor of the small centre, it is clear that students at Tadamoun are enjoying themselves. Laughter seeps from behind classroom doors, notice boards proudly display students' brightly coloured work, and the demand for the centre's literacy and remedial classes is rising.

Literacy Classes

"I come here everyday," says 13 year-old school drop-out Salwa, quietly confessing that, although her two-hour literacy class is scheduled to finish at 10:30am, some days she stays for up to four hours.

Salwa's story is not uncommon in Ein el Helweh. She left school after failing the 5th grade – overcrowding and the lack of individual support allowed her to pass from grade to grade without ever learning to read and write properly.

After three months at Tadamoun, Salwa now knows the joy of learning, "I feel so happy when I come here," she says. "The classes here are great, the teachers pay attention to us and love us. Now, I want to learn and when I can read and write, I want to go back to school. I want to go to university."

For students like Salwa, there is a high probability that, with continued support, they will be reintegrated

into UNRWA schools, explained Salam, one of four teachers at Tadamoun. For others, who are older, have additional social pressures and for whom reintegration would be complicated, the programme is inclusive yet realistic, and ensures these children learn basic literacy and numeracy skills – taught using real life scenarios. The idea is to provide them with basic life skills to prepare them for vocational training and other skills-building endeavours.

At only 14, it is unlikely that Yusef will return to school – he left one year ago to help his father support their family, but he has elected to continue his education at the centre. "It's important to learn because you need to know how to read and write," he says, but admits that attending classes can be difficult. "I come as often as I can but sometimes I have to leave early – my sister is sick, I have to take care of her, do the shopping and work with my dad. But I am always here at 8:30am."

Remedial Classes

For years Sajida struggled to get her 14 year-old son, Saed to go to school. "It was so hard to get him motivated," she recalls. "He could read but didn't understand what he was learning."

Sitting in the Tadamoun centre, Sajida is one of eight mothers, all members of a newly formed parents' council – a group designed to increase family support for children's educational progress and to lobby for better quality education.

The mothers openly discuss the concerns they have for their children – the quality of education, the high number of drop-outs and delinquency and the increasing exposure to drugs and recruitment by armed factions. But, amongst these challenges they all remark on the changes they have witnessed since their children began attending remedial classes supported by DRC.

"It changed my son's life. When his marks began to improve, it made staying at school so much easier for him," says one, "My daughter is

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"We want children to experience the joy of learning"



PROFILE: Mahmoud

As a child, Mahmoud spent hours in an alley in Saida's industrial city watching a man magically craft shiny brass handles and lamps out of what appeared to be mountains of finely sifted sand and an oversized oven.

He dreamt of the day he would make his living working in a similar, blackened and noisy workshop.

At 25, after spending 8 years learning the skills from the man he admired as a child, Mahmoud, who together with his brother supports their family of five, is now only months away from opening a copper moulding shop.

Identified by DRC's local income generation partner, the Palestinian Arab Women League (PAWL), as a beneficiary – Mahmoud attended a business management workshop and submitted a plan to be considered for tools and equipment to start his own business.

With his trade skills, rare in this increasingly mechanised world, combined with a natural business aptitude and an abundance of motivation, Mahmoud personifies the

young Palestinian entrepreneur the DRC programme was designed to support.

"I learnt this trade quickly, I loved it and have always wanted to have my own business one day," he says, whilst effortlessly continuing to mould what will soon be street lamps along the Saida Corniche.

Mahmoud, who describes himself as an 'almost lucky artist,' will receive, alongside 24 other aspiring businessmen and women, an in-kind grant of start-up equipment by April 2009 and ongoing business mentoring, through PAWL.

He admits that the prospect of 'going alone' is a little scary, but says the fear he feels will inspire him to work hard and be successful.

Mahmoud's business study predicts economic independence and success within the first few months, and once established he has the potential to earn up to 10 times his current salary.

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good at school, but with this support she is improving," adds another.

"The weaker kids seem to fall through the cracks at school. Without these classes, our kids have no future, no support, we are really thankful for them so that they are given at least a chance to succeed," summarised Basima, whose 11 year-old son Faouzi attends afternoon classes.

112 students attend remedial classes at Tadamoun, and only three months after commencing, parents and teachers believe they are achieving better academically, developing greater self-confidence and becoming increasingly positive about their educational future. The students' progress at UNRWA schools is being monitored monthly by Tadamoun staff and their household visits are encouraging parent involvement.

Local NGOs – Association Najdeh, Compatriot Association and Nabila Breir Foundation – are also DRC project partners offering similar educational support in EHC. Teaching staff from these NGOs, and five others, have attended a DRC supported training (conducted by University of St. Joseph) to improve their teaching techniques and methodologies in the classroom.

VOICES: Discover the real impact of vocational training

A partnership with local NGO Najdeh Association is providing opportunities for 15 nursing students to complete their final year of studies. The impact of this training is reaching far beyond the classroom.

	<p>STUDENT</p>		<p>PARENT</p>		<p>PARTNER</p>
<p><i>"This training will lead me to my ambition – to be educated, to help people and to be independent."</i></p> <p>RAMI Final Year Nursing Student</p>		<p><i>"It's a great program – our children need every chance for a good future; this training means they can get a good job."</i></p> <p>MERVAT Rami's Mother</p>		<p><i>"This opportunity motivates young people. Graduating with a certificate will keep them away from the streets and on a good path."</i></p> <p>JIHAN Najdeh Centre EHC Branch</p>	

DRC INTERNATIONAL

Danish Refugee Council is a private, independent, non-profit organisation (NGO), devoted, on the basis of humanitarian principles and human rights in general, to securing the protection of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), and to promoting long term solutions to the problems of forced displacement.

Internationally, DRC participates actively in the efforts of the international community to promote solutions for conflict-affected populations.

The support and capacity building of local and national authorities and NGOs form an integrated part of DRC's work.

DRC is currently working in 25 countries primarily in the Balkans, Caucasus, Central Asia, Horn of Africa, West Africa, Afghanistan and the Middle East and had a total turnover in 2007 of 60 million EUR.

DRC LEBANON

DRC has been active in Lebanon since 2004 providing protection and assistance to Palestinian and Iraqi refugees, and to Lebanese communities affected by the 2006 war.

The Lebanon programme operates across a number of sectors and, to date, DRC's core activities have focused on: Housing, Income generation support, Non-food aid support, Legal aid and Capacity building.

In addition, DRC has produced a series of population assessment surveys on the non-ID Palestinian and Iraqi refugee communities, and is a leading advocate on refugee protection in Lebanon.

Major programme donors include the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO), Danida, UNHCR, the British Government, and the Lisa and Gudmund Joergensen Fond.

DRC Lebanon invites comments from project participants and beneficiaries regarding the quality of DRC services and the performance of DRC staff.

Comments may be addressed to the DRC Country Representative, in writing, by e-mail, by fax or telephone. Please include name and contact information if a response is required.

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