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Emerging Voices

Learning to Learn:

Mothers' Journeys to Helping their Kids with Learning Disabilities

"Children with learning disabilities constitute 4% of every population," said Samar Jaber, the main specialist who led Al-Om Madrasa— an expression in Arabic that describes mothers as the base of the best educational-initiative in the city of Nablus, West Bank.

The initiative was created to help mothers of children with dyslexia and other learning disabilities apply creative methods to help their children learn better. Al-Om Madrasa was launched by an initiative that sprung out of Ruwwad/EDC's Leadership and Community Participation training, funded by USAID, and implemented at Jabal Al-Naar YDRC.

Through Al-Om Madrasa initiative, 25 youth provided a training for 25 mothers on how to help their children practice the simplest skills; dictating words, sculpting letters, and reading out loud. The aforementioned youth leaders have received training from an education specialist on effective methods and techniques for assisting children with learning disabilities. The initiative ended with a closing ceremony at Jabal-Al Nar YDRC in Nablus.

Om-Ahmad Al-Zorbah, a mother who participated in the training, was asked to speak at the closing ceremony. Al-Zorbah had two children involved in the initiative; Ahmad who suffers from a speech impediment and dyslexia, and Rawan who is suffering from debilitating shyness which is affecting her performance in school and participation in class. Al-Zorbah talked about fighting for her children to acquire a better education despite the lack of special education units at their school. Her fight was not just bound to her son and daughter, but all those other parents and children who do not understand learning disabilities, and have no means to treat them.



Mothers, children and volunteers at Jabal Al-Nar YDRC

Before the end of the ceremony, Rawan, Al-Zorbah's daughter stood up in front of the crowd and held a microphone, she was so small that the bottom of it reached her chest. She slowly talked about how a couple of months ago she would have never been able to stand up and speak in class, let alone in front of a crowd." Smiles slowly scattered around the room as she uttered words. Rawan ended with "Thank you mama."

Our Leaders: The Green Earth Initiative



Volunteers on the first day of the Green Earth Initiative

Madlaine Ibrahim Abu-Hattab (21-years-old)

“We wanted our initiative to create a legacy in our community” said Abu-Hattab, a young woman who started as a participant in the 11th Leadership and Community Participation training, and graduated a leader of the winning initiative “The Green Land.”

Abu-Hattab has been active at Ruwwad ever since. She has helped develop the initiative and bring it to life, and recruited youth volunteers from all over the West Bank to participate in farming the land and cleaning the water source. She radiated with confidence because she is part of a team that changed the life of Ein-Sinya’s Community.

As a journalism major, Abu-Hattab dreams of becoming a global correspondent, “I want to tell the stories of people at home and everywhere else. People deserve to have a voice.”

The Green Earth Initiative: This unique initiative brought together young volunteers from high schools and universities to work together on cleaning land and planting trees at Ein-Sinya village, located North of Ramallah. The village houses a water source that is being eaten up by dirt and algae. The initiative was designed by participants in the 11th Youth Leadership and Community Engagement training who believed that planting trees is one of the most vital ways to contributing to keeping the water source clean.

Khader Al-Franji (22-years-old)

“The reason I supported this initiative is because it hit home to me. We have the same problem with pollution and waste water at the refugee camp I’m from in Jericho.” Al-Franji said. He seemed to be in disbelief at the possibility that their initiative has provided for the residents of Ein-Sinya and neighboring areas. “We wanted this initiative to become a trend in the West Bank and Gaza. We want it to be the beginning of a big change.”

Al-Franji is no ordinary kid, he is a trainer at a horseback riding club near Ramallah. He has big dreams of representing Palestine in international horse races. “I have done more than 20 races and every time it feels brand new. I’m flooded with pride when I wave our flag in a competition.”

As for how this initiative changed his life, Al-Franji felt like he finally belonged to a space “I travel all the time and for the first time I feel like I have contributed to a geographic space and made it look more beautiful.” Al-Franji cannot wait to do this all over Palestine.



Volunteers at Ein-Sinya



Volunteers at Ein-Sinya

How to keep a water source clean:

- Do not throw trash by the water.
- Keep the area around the water source clean.
- Limit the use of pesticides and fertilizers around the water source.

Final thoughts...

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”-Margaret Mead

10-years-ago, no one would have believed us had we said that we will have a project like Ruwwad/EDC in Palestine. Today, we watch our Leadership and Community Participation Training, and Youth Led Community Service Initiatives bloom and go places bigger than we had ever imagined.

One of the reasons that Ruwwad/EDC and other similar projects are making a difference is because of youth volunteers; without these committed individuals who sacrifice their energy and time to elevate and change their communities, nothing we do will ever mean anything, or go further than implementation plans.

So you, reading this newsletter right now, get up and come volunteer!

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The Latest At RUWWAD:

- Media Training cycle 9:

22 young journalism and media majors come together to learn invaluable skills in communications, dialogue, feature writing, filming spots, and media related research.

- Efta'a Qalbak (Open your Heart):

Efta'a Qalbak is one of Ruwwad's newest initiatives that sheds light on youths' relationships with the elderly. Efta'a Qalbak includes visits to retirement homes where youth leaders can communicate with senior residents and benefit from their life experience.

- Lamsa (a tender touch):

Lamsa initiative focuses on integrating young girls living in foster care and orphanages in their community through different social activities.



Training at Beit-Al tifil, Hebron

How to Connect with Youth Pioneers Like You!

*As part of our efforts to help our youth connect and change the world together, we have created our youth portal:
www.shababgate.ps*

Visit us to connect with active youth like you and learn about education, jobs, health, sports, environment and endless resources!



Intel Learn Class at Beit-Al-Tifil, Hebron



Q: How do I apply to participate in a Leadership and Community Participation training?

A: Download an application from our website or visit our main office in Ramallah, or any of our Youth Development Resource Centers in Nablus, Hebron or Al-Bireh to pick up an application. We can't wait to have you.