



The younger students prepare to shape dough in the library of the Dbayeh Centre.

All photos: DSPR Lebanon

Winter Story

THE SUN ENTERED MY LIFE

BY GILLIAN SOUTHEY | CWS COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR.

The chance to gain qualifications and keep learning is often important to people displaced by war and conflict. In Lebanon, Samer and Ahreej have choices and opportunities they thought had vanished when war forced them and their families to flee Syria. Our local partner, the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR) known locally as the Joint Christian Committee (JCC), has helped them start a new life, as they have done for countless Palestinians who have fled since the Nakba or Catastrophe of 1948.

Since its formation in 1950, DSPR Lebanon has focused on education, the dignity of people and supporting the rights and culture of Palestinians. Its work has changed over time. Today it runs a preschool, study centres, libraries, popular vocational and agricultural training programmes, a special exam-focused programme for Syrian secondary students, classes for children who have missed school, an annual Summer Camp, a women’s programme and adult literacy classes.

Samer’s Story

Samer (pictured bottom left) was in grade 8 when war broke out in Syria. A Palestinian-Syrian, he lived in the more prosperous Yarmouk Camp in Damascus until fleeing with his family in 2012.

“I felt lost and confused with no dreams,” he said. Samer started school in Lebanon but soon dropped out, missing grade 10 altogether. With nothing much to do, he realised he did want to study for his Baccalaureate according to the Syrian curriculum and was very impressed by the teachers at the Sidon Centre school.



DSPR Lebanon uses art, craft, dance and music to teach students about their Palestinian heritage and peace.



Left: “The sun entered my life,” says Samer, a Syrian refugee. He remains forever grateful to DSPR Lebanon and those who support its work. Right: Medical staff check students who are part of DSPR’s programmes.

“DSPR Lebanon makes us unbreakable. Attending the Sabra Centre gave me hope in life again. We lost a lot of hope, energy and power [because of the war].” — Ahreej



Older children enjoy visits to the forest, zoo, or swimming pool as part of the Summer Camp programme. It is a welcome break from the cramped refugee camps or crowded places where they live.



By participating in DSPR's programmes, the children can forget about their worries for a few hours.

“They had an unbelievable way of teaching. They wanted to build a new generation after the war... We owe DSPR Lebanon for our renewed hope. When I passed the Baccalaureate exam, I felt as though the sun had entered into my life.”

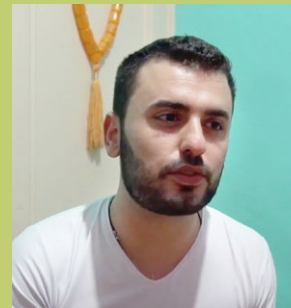
DSPR Lebanon offers the only opportunity for Syrian students to sit this final High School exam. Staff arrange the three-week trip back to Damascus, including the special visas that will allow them to return – something that is prohibited for other refugees. DSPR Lebanon organises buses, accommodation, food and the necessary permissions to sit the exams.

“You not only funded us but rescued young people who were completely broken with despair and gave them hope to rebuild their lives. You made them feel that with education and knowledge they will be able to rebuild their own homes. They will rebuild with the certificates they hold. We owe all this to those who paid for every pencil, every table, the premises, the blackboard and the books they brought from Syria. They did all this without asking us for a single piaster. All our thanks go to them.”

After passing his exams, Samer was accepted into the communications programme of a Syrian university.

“I want to keep DSPR Lebanon alive and support it so that it can help others attain their dreams... It is building a new educated generation which is building a nation founded on education and knowledge,” says Samer.

Dealing with Trauma



“Trauma is trauma. It is the hardest thing on children. It takes time for them to move on, to make sense of it because trauma is senseless. Why was there a war? A child cannot make sense of these things. Why have I lost my house? Why have I lost one of my

family members? my friends? Why do I have to live in a different country? ... It is hard for the child but with time they can find some meaning for this, even if it is a small thing.”

Elio, a child psychologist at the Dbayeh Centre.

In the Sabra Centre there is a room set aside for the specialists who work with children facing special challenges. Around 30 children have received help with speech difficulties, communication abilities, behavioural problems, or slow learning abilities this year. Some are referred to other professionals for treatment.

Give Life

For Samer and Ahreej, DSPR Lebanon has been a passport to survival. Will you help other young people find their own future? Your gift to our Education Appeal will support refugees and people trapped in poverty with the education that opens doors and makes dreams come true.



United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 :
Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
See: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>

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