

CENTRE FOR GLOBAL EDUCATION & WOMEN'S PROGRAM ASSOCIATION



PROJECT NOUR:

EDUCATING PALESTINIAN AND SYRIAN REFUGEES IN BEIRUT, LEBANON, 2022



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PROJECT NOUR: EDUCATING PALESTINIAN AND SYRIAN REFUGEES IN BEIRUT, LEBANON, 2022



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Centre for Global Education, October 2022

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1 Project Summary

This is a report on activities delivered in year one of a two-year project (2022-2023) in Burj Barajneh refugee camp, Beirut, jointly managed by the Centre for Global Education (CGE), a development non-governmental organisation (NGO) based in Belfast, and the Women's Program Association, a Palestinian NGO based in Lebanon. The project was funded by the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) Global Solidarity and Developing World Fund. The activities described in this report were delivered from 04 February to 30 July 2022.



Some of the 100 Palestinian and Syrian children who participated in the CGE / Women's Program Association project in Burj Barajneh refugee camp, Beirut, from February to July 2022. Photo May 2022.

The project's overriding aim was to provide educational and psychosocial support services to 100 Palestinian and Syrian refugee children aged 6-12 years unable to attend school and suffering from the acute effects of trauma caused by exposure to severe poverty in Burj Barajneh refugee camp. The project provided psychosocial care to help tackle mental health problems among the child participants including interactive group activities and one-to-one counselling. Every child received a meal every day for the duration of the project and were taken on four field trips outside the camp to an amusement park, a play, a picnic and camping trip. They also participated in cultural activities and memorial events to mark important dates in the Palestinian calendar such as Land Day. For parents of the young people, the project provided their children with a safe and structured play environment inside the camp which supported formal sector learning, psychosocial care, arts and crafts, and cultural activities.

The activities were successfully concluded in July 2022 and CGE Director, Stephen McCloskey, visited the programme at the half-way point in May to meet the project staff and young people, evaluate year one of the programme and plan for year two. The main issue currently faced by the project is the loss of the WPA's Nour Centre in Burj Barajneh where the activities were delivered in year one. The landlord who owns the property has asked the WPA to vacate the premises so that he can secure a better rent from other tenants. The WPA is currently searching for new premises for the project in the camp. They need a building with four rooms that can accommodate 25 students each.

The wider context in Lebanon

Lebanon is in the midst of an economic crisis that has seen the Lebanese pound collapse against the Dollar and prices for food, fuel and energy surge beyond the reach of the majority of people. The crisis began in October 2019 when the government tried to impose austerity measures on an already impoverished population which resulted in widespread protests and upheaval. In March 2020, Lebanon's economy was sent spiralling into freefall when the state [defaulted](#) on a \$1.2 billion Eurobond debt repayment

which triggered a 90 per cent depletion in the value of the currency which is currently trading at 40,000 LPB to the Dollar. The social and economic crisis deepened when a massive explosion in Beirut's port on 4 August 2020, killed 241 people, made 300,000 homeless and caused an estimated \$3.8-4.6 billion in material damage. The weakness of Lebanon's pound has caused a spike in the cost of transportation by 508 per cent, and the prices of food and non-alcoholic beverages surged to 304 per cent by October 2021. Palestinians were already living on the margins of Lebanese society before the crisis being excluded from 40 occupations and forced into low paying jobs in the informal sector. A third of Lebanon's 180,000 Palestinian refugees depend on quarterly cash assistance from UNRWA and 62 per cent experienced a drop in income during the COVID-19 pandemic. While people across Lebanon are suffering from the economic crisis, it is particularly impacting Palestinian refugees denied the property, employment and citizenship rights of the Lebanese.



A memorial to the victims of the Beirut Port explosion on 4 August 2020.

2 Women's Program Association

The Centre for Global Education's project partner is the Women's Program Association (WPA), a non-governmental, non-profit organization established in 2008 and operating in nine Palestinian camps in Lebanon. The WPA works to enhance the quality of life of refugees and their opportunities for employment. The WPA is immersed in the refugee camps where it operates and works directly with families and community members. Its programmes and activities include: delivering education services to children; providing women with professional and vocational training; career guidance; and leadership and entrepreneurial skill building activities. In 2013, recognizing the educational crisis for newly arrived Syrian refugees, the WPA founded its own community school, the Nour Center ('Nour' means light in Arabic), which provides educational services and psycho-social support for 200 Syrian and Palestinian children and youth living in Burj El Barajneh.

The WPA's Director is Mariam Al Shaar, who is hugely experienced in project management and in meeting the needs of local and international funders. Mariam was born in the Burj Barajneh, where she now lives, to Palestinian parents. She has been a social worker for almost twenty years, and manages education, vocational-skills training and microloans programmes delivered by the WPA. In 2013, with seed funding from Alfanoor, a venture philanthropy, she founded Soufra, a catering business that employs women from Burj Barajneh camp.



The Women's Program Association team that delivered Project Nour from February to July 2022 including second from left Mariam Al Shaar, Director of the WPA.

3 Background to project

There are **479,000** registered Palestinian refugees in Lebanon living in 12 camps operated by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). UNRWA is the UN mission established to provide for the welfare of Palestinian refugees following the **ethnic cleansing** of Palestine in 1948. In the absence of a census, UNRWA estimates on the basis of take-up of its services, that **180,000** Palestinian refugees are residing in-country. The lack of precision in regard to numbers is in large part owing to the Palestinian Refugees Syria (PRS) who fled to Lebanon after the start of the war in Syria in 2011. **Sixty per cent** of PRS (262,000) have been displaced at least once by the war, 4,000 have been killed and 50,000 are estimated to have left the country.



Burj Barajneh Refugee Camp, Beirut. May 2022.

The war in Syria has resulted in approximately 29,000 Palestinian Refugees from Syria seeking sanctuary in the 12 UNRWA camps in Lebanon. This has increased pressure on camp services, particularly in the crucial areas of health and education. Palestine Refugees from Syria (PRS) are often competing with

Palestine Refugees from Lebanon (PRL) for employment in low-paid, manual jobs which perpetuate poverty. UNRWA provides 61,000 out of Lebanon's 180,000 Palestinian refugees with quarterly cash assistance, and more than 29,000 Palestine refugees from Syria (PRS) with monthly cash assistance. The World Food Programme [found](#) that 62 per cent of Palestinian refugees suffered reduced household income following the COVID-19 pandemic, 39 per cent lost their jobs and 21 per cent experienced a reduction in their salary.

The surge in refugee arrivals from Syria has exacerbated a marginal existence for Palestinians in Lebanon where the majority of refugees and their descendants have not been naturalised despite fleeing to the country in 1948. According to [UNHCR](#), Palestinians are reportedly denied access to 36 professions including medicine, farming, fishery and public transportation which forces them into 'menial, low-paying jobs in the informal sector'. They are also prohibited from owning property which contributes to their exclusion from key aspects of social, political and economic life in Lebanon.

Burj Barajneh Camp

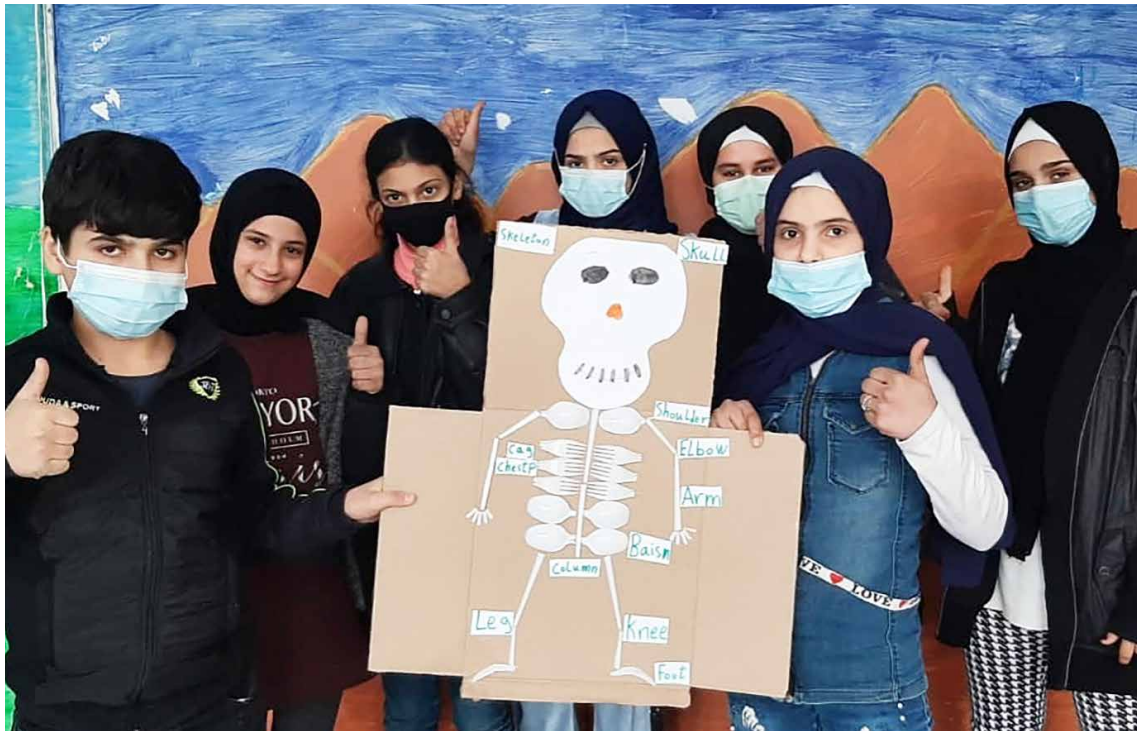
The League of Red Cross Societies established Burj Barajneh camp in 1948 to accommodate refugees who fled from Galilee in northern Palestine. The camp is in the southern suburbs of Beirut, near Beirut International Airport. Burj Barajneh suffered heavily throughout the Lebanese civil war when nearly a quarter of the camp's population was displaced. Men from the camp generally work as casual labourers in construction, and women mostly work in sewing factories or as cleaners. The living environment in Burj Barajneh is extremely hazardous, especially for children. The camp is a labyrinth of narrow alleyways with low-hanging inter-twining water pipes and electricity cables that have caused more than 50 [fatalities](#), mostly children, from electrocution. The tight alleyways and overhanging buildings mean that large areas of the camp are denied natural light. A combination of poor sanitation, a limited diet, low incomes and inadequate housing contribute to illness and mental health problems. The Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Phillippe Lazzarini, visited Lebanon in December 2021 and, in regard to the financial crisis, [said](#) that 'Refugees I met are utterly desperate and struggle to cover their basic needs'. He added, 'The social fabric within the community is imploding, divorces are on the rise, as is gender-based violence. UNRWA staff are also encountering anger and resentment'. This is the worrying context in which the Centre's project is being delivered.



Burj Barajneh refugee camp. Low hanging wires make the camp's environment treacherous, particularly for children. With the risk of electrocution. May 2022.

4 Project Nour

The project was delivered in the Nour Center, Burj Barajneh refugee camp which was founded in 2013 to meet the educational needs of newly arrived Syrian children and Palestinian young people. The project participants were Palestinian and Syrian refugee children living in Burj Barajneh aged 6-12 years, of whom 50 were Palestinian Refugees Lebanon (PRL) and 50 were Syrian and Palestinian Refugees Syria (PRS). An estimated 50-60 per cent of Syrian children living in Lebanon are not attending school because they are not registered with UNRWA and unable to access UN services. Many Palestinian children drop out of school because their educational and economic opportunities are so limited in Lebanon and because they want to contribute to the family income through work in the informal economy. The Nour Center provided a safe and supportive environment for the children where they could receive psychosocial support and educational activities within the camp community. At an individual level, students at the Nour Center were able to develop personal competencies and interpersonal skills which can prepare them for re-engagement with education or for vocational training toward employment.



Children participate in an English class as part of the CGE/WPA Project Nour in Burj Barajneh refugee camp. March 2022 | Women's Program Association.

Project aim

To provide education and psychosocial support services to 100 Palestinian and Syrian children aged 6-12 years in Burj Barajneh refugee camp, Beirut, Lebanon.

Project Objectives

The project objectives were as follows:

- To provide a safe location for children to learn within a community environment;
- To enhance the formal educational knowledge and skills of children not registered in full-time education in Lebanon;

- To provide psycho-social support to children suffering from trauma and stress;
- To provide opportunities for play in a fun environment outside the camp;
- To enable young people to develop life-long learning skills that will enhance their prospects for employment and engagement with full-time education.

Project delivery

The project was delivered over a period of six months to 100 children aged 6-12 years. They were divided into four groups of 25 and attended the Women's Program Association from Monday - Friday, 8.30am to 12.30pm. Each group was facilitated by a trained member of the WPA team with the necessary skills and experience to deliver education activities and psycho-social support. The children received training in key areas of the curriculum: Mathematics, English, Arabic, literacy, numeracy and arts and crafts. Each child received a snack every day and was taken on four field trips over the duration of the project.

The content of the lessons was as follows:

English	<p>Letters</p> <p>Numbers</p> <p>Days of the week</p> <p>Months of the year</p> <p>Sentence structure</p> <p>Introducing oneself</p> <p>Family tree</p> <p>Parts of the body</p> <p>Shapes</p> <p>Vocabulary and Conversation</p> <p>Food pyramid</p> <p>Personal identity</p> <p>Time and Clock</p> <p>Countries and Continents</p> <p>The four seasons</p>
Arabic	<p>Letters</p> <p>Personal identity</p> <p>Senses</p> <p>Letters and words</p> <p>Days of the week</p> <p>Months of the year</p> <p>Long and Short Sounds</p> <p>Learning about Nature</p> <p>Professions</p> <p>Syntax</p> <p>Words and Syllables</p>

Mathematics	Numbers Summation Subtraction Multiplication Tables (1,2,3,4) Time
Life Skills	Focusing Team work Communication Imagination Problem solving Bullying Awareness Child Labour Awareness Removing Negative Energy Puppet Theatre Role Play

PROJECT OUTCOMES

1. Formal Education

The children received classes every day from 8.30am – 12.30pm that covered key areas of the schools' curriculum including Arabic, English, Mathematics and Life Skills. The managers of the project had to quickly adapt to delivery under the restrictions imposed by COVID-19. This meant delivering the classes in smaller groups and ensuring that the children had access to PPE, including sanitiser and masks. The Women's Program Association also established WhatsApp groups to provide students with activities to complete during lockdown. These activities focused on the mental wellbeing of children during lockdown to ensure they had regular communication with their peers and facilitators.



A facilitator and children in class during Project Nour, Burj Barajneh refugee camp, Beirut, Lebanon. May 2022 | Centre for Global Education.

2. Arts and Crafts

All of the children had the opportunity to participate in classes focused on arts and crafts, including drawing, wall murals and paper crafts. The classes also observed international days such as Refugee Day on 20 June in which they produced art and had discussions on the life of a refugee. The paper crafts often complemented the core curriculum subjects (Arabic, English and Numeracy) and resulted in colourful wall murals.



Children working on a wall display on nature in an Arts and Crafts class as part of Project Nour, Burj Barajneh refugee camp, Beirut. March 2022. Women's Program Association.



3. Day Trips

Project Nour provided four day trips over the duration of the project for the 100 children. They were taken on a picnic to Horsh Beirut to play and have fun outside the camp. They went on a day trip to Chamsine Valley in Al Bekaa to experience a nature reserve. Other day trips involved attending a play and an amusement centre.



Children enjoying a day trip to a nature reserve in the Beqaa Valley as part of Project Nour. March 2022. WPA.

4. Receiving a Meal Everyday

One of the Women's Program Association's many achievements in Burj Barajneh has been the creation of Soufra, a catering business that produces food in the camp and sells it at subsidised prices. A vertical garden on the roof of the WPA building grows a range of vegetables that sustains Soufra's catering activities. The children participating in the program received a snack every day made possible through Soufra and NIPSA's support.



Children enjoying food prepared as part of activities organised in Burj Barajneh to commemorate Land Day on 30 March 2022. This is an important date in the Palestinian calendar in which six Arab citizens were killed defending their land from expropriation. March 2022. Courtesy of WPA.

5. Cultural activities

The children had the opportunity to participate in cultural activities including traditional dance which is a central element of Palestinian and Syrian life. *Dabka* is traditional Palestinian song and dance that young people learn from an early age. The children also composed and acted out role plays focused on important social issues such as street children and homelessness. On 30 March 2022, the children participated in events commemorating Land Day, which is an important date in the Palestinian calendar remembering 30 March 1976 when six unarmed Arab citizens were killed as part of non-violent actions to prevent the expropriation of Palestinian land. The day not only commemorates this past event, but it also celebrates the Palestinian spirit of revolution.



Children performing traditional dance in April 2022 as part of Project Nour. April 2022. WPA.

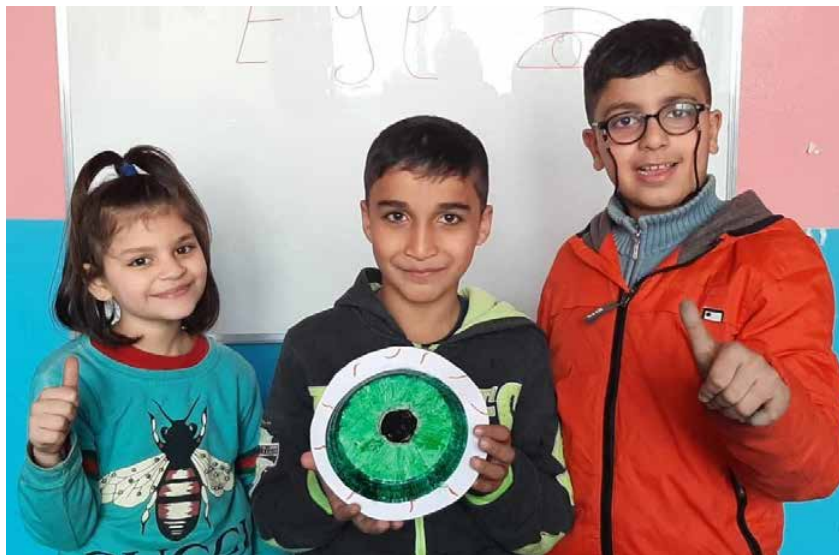
6. Evaluation

In May 2022, CGE Director, Stephen McCloskey, visited Burj Barajneh to meet the project staff including: Mariam al-Shaar, Director of the Women's Program Association; Tahani Charif, Project Manager; Mariam Sweidan, Project Co-ordinator; Diala Faraj (Arabic teacher); Sally Hajaj (English Teacher); Barra Kassem (Life-skills Teacher); and Yazi al-Ebady (Maths teacher). The arts and crafts produced by the young people was of a consistently high quality and is a great credit to the facilitators. The young people were congratulated on behalf of NIPSA and the Centre for Global Education. The children were given stationery provided by NIPSA which was greatly appreciated.



CGE Director, Stephen McCloskey, meeting the Women's Program Association team at an evaluation meeting in the Soufra Centre, Burj Barajneh Camp, Beirut. May 2022. WPA.

Despite the continuing challenges presented by COVID-19, the project training was delivered face-to-face in 2022 in the Nour Centre. Facilitators and parents are frustrated that the project only spans half the year but that is due to the limitation of the funding available. Otherwise, parents are really pleased with the opportunity for their children to receive formal education in a community setting when they are otherwise unable to attend school. The WPA are gratified that funding is available from NIPSA to support the project in 2023. However, the main challenge faced by the project is that the Nour Centre has to find new premises after their landlord asked the WPA to vacate its premises. The WPA are currently exploring alternative premises in the camp before the start of the 2023 project in February 2023.



7. Case Studies

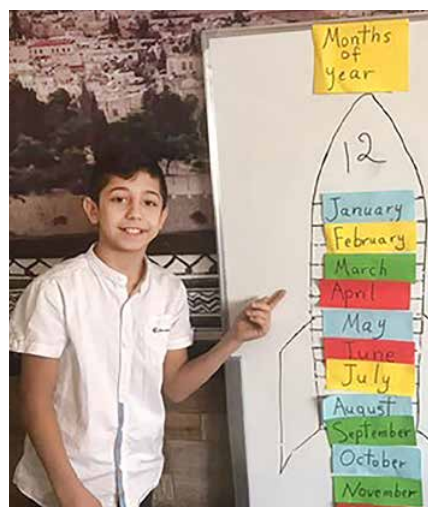
7.1 Abed AL Hadi Mahmoud Orabi

Name: Abed AL Hadi Mahmoud Orabi

Age: Eleven years

Nationality: Palestinian.

A student at the Nour center who make excellent progression in English, Arabic and Mathematics. He is now able to introduce himself in English fluently and is constantly adding new vocabulary. He has become more confident in introducing himself to others. The classes in Life Skills have encouraged him to be more self-assured in expressing himself.



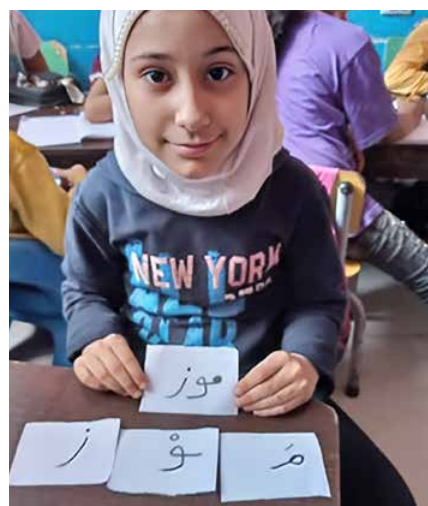
7.2 Entisar Milad Zamzam

Name: Entisar Milad Zamzam

Age: Ten years

Nationality: Palestinian

A student at the Nour Center who is not enrolled at school so her only access to education is at the Center. She has learned how to read and write both in Arabic and English. She can connect words into a correct sentence structure. She has formed a bond with her teachers and the staff that felt like home.



7.3 Shaymaa Mostafa al Jamal

Name: Shaymaa Mostafa al Jamal

Age: Nine years

Nationality: Palestinian

A student at the Nour center. She has been suffering from psychological distress so the teachers worked with her on a one-to-one basis by helping her express her feelings through effective communication. Spending time at the Center has improved her psychological and social well-being. She has learned how to communicate and develop new friendships. She has also acquired new skills in learning such as writing short paragraphs, reading, and basic Mathematics.



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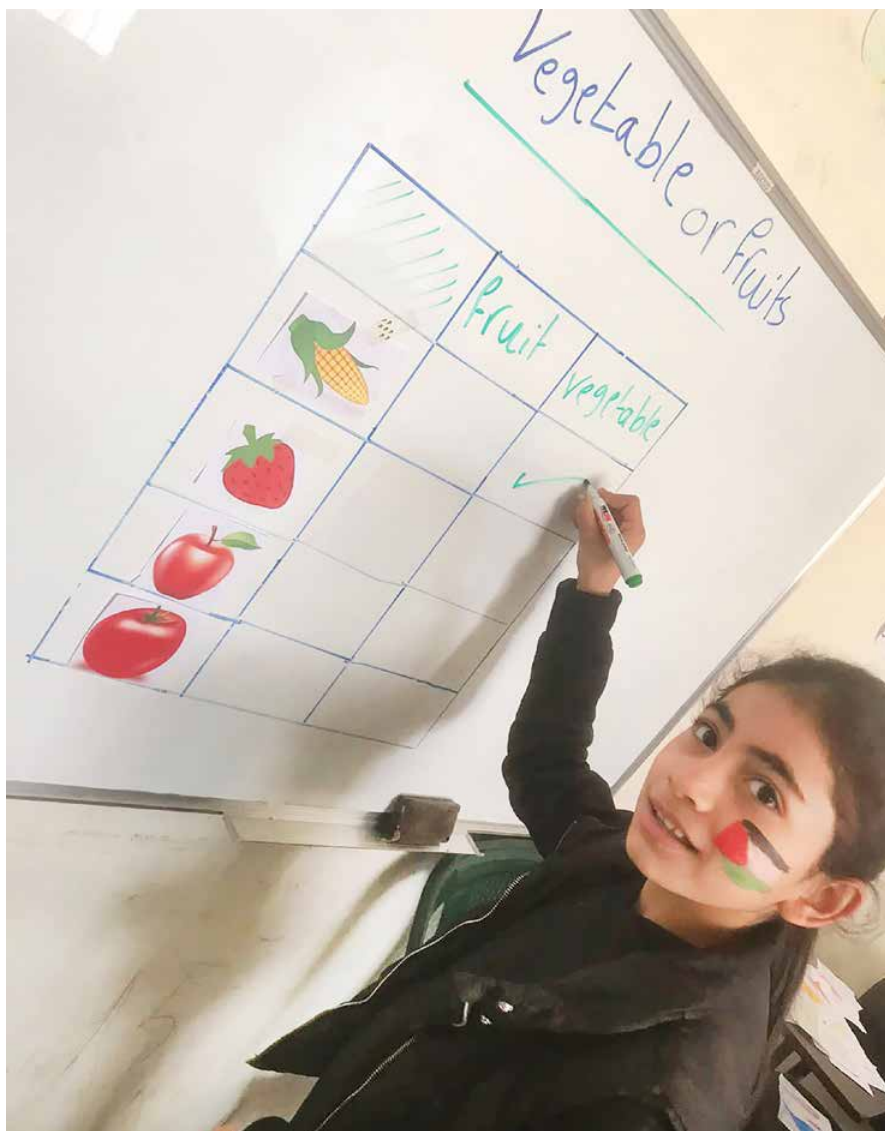
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Appendix 1: WPA Team

Name	Position
Maryam Sweidan	Project Co-ordinator
Diala Faraj	Arabic teacher
Sally Hajaj	English teacher
Barra Kassem	Life Skills Teacher
Yazi al-Abady	Mathematics teacher

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