

issue

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Country Office • Syria

03

Photo: Damascus • Summer Activities • Jun. 15, 2017



PEACE
BEGINS WITH YOUR
SMILE



Psychosocial Support & Child Protection **Training**

Forty JRS staffers (animators and social workers) from both the JRS Centres in Damascus, participated recently in a five days training on Psychosocial Support and Child Protection.

The training which was facilitated by **Ms. Fatima Darwich**, a professional, focused on the issues/problems related to certain behavioural patterns like violence, stubbornness, introversion and

shyness. In keeping with the JRS spirit of accompanying and protecting all children, the trainees were imparted various skills in dealing with such behavior and to help the concerned children towards a holistic growth. All found the training very meaningful and in the words of Itab Fazaa, a Staff member. *“Several of my questions and concerns were answered in this training. I hope we will have more such opportunities in the future”*.



Project Management Cycle Workshop

Dealing effectively with the 'Project Management Cycle' is crucial for the work of JRS. With this in view, **Mr. Hadi Nasser** the Programme Officer of JRS Syria facilitated workshops in March and April for the core team members of all projects in Aleppo, Damascus and Homs. The content of the training included the monitoring and evaluation of the project and its effective implementation.

Thanks to the workshop which had several practical exercises, the participants are convinced that there will now be a qualitative improvement in the management of our projects.



Finance Team Training

This was followed by a training for the JRS Syria Finance team at the Regional Office. Several points related to improving financial management were imparted to them. On their return from Beirut the Country Finance Team facilitated a similar workshop for three days in the month of May at the Alberto Hurtado, the JRS Staff care Centre in Damascus.

JRS Syria wishes to place on record a sincere gratitude to Nasser Qabbani, our Country Finance Officer, who very reluctantly had to leave us recently. His hard work and commitment is appreciated by all. We wish him a bright future.



Human Resource Program **Training** ▶

The JRS Syria HR team were at the JRS Regional Office (Beirut) in March for a training on the proposed on-line Human resource program and for other matters dealing with HR.

‘Teamwork’ is core to our JRS way of proceeding. In order to help realise this ideal the Staff Care Team organizes various trainings/ workshops to help in the bonding of the team and to help all to be aware that it is “in giving that we receive”.

Two recent initiatives were a dance workshop and an embroidery workshop. These workshops were a response of the team's desire to share with one another their talents and in doing so, to deepen their relationships. It is indeed quality time with one another but in a joyous and relaxed atmosphere!

Dancing & Embroidery **Workshops**



ALEPPO

The JRS team in Aleppo continues with its unstinted support to the affected people in the area, despite many obstacles.

On March 1st, 800 families in Al-Fardous eastern Aleppo, were given essential items like hygiene kits & equipment, gas cooker, woolen socks and underwear.

This was followed by more than 100 families in Jibreen (also in eastern Aleppo) being provided with gas cylinders.

Jabal Badro is a new distribution point in eastern Aleppo, which provides hot cooked and nutritious meals for almost 900 affected families daily.

Of late there is a relative calm in Aleppo (sounds of violence can be heard occasionally though). The residents feel a bit relieved because the electricity supply has now improved (two hours in the morning and two hours in the evening).

There is also hope that there will be a further improvement in the days to come. With the overall security situation having become much better one of the returnees says, ***“thank God we are more secure now, we are now able to face the many other challenges that lie ahead!”***.

HOMS

The JRS Team in Homs continued uninterruptedly with its activities inspite of some recent explosions in neighbourhoods in the vicinity. The recent highlights included:

The ‘end of the school year’ celebration for the children was a great occasion for the children to show their parents, other family members and friends all that they had imbibed over the year. They sang songs of peace, danced for joy with their beautiful smiles which lit up their angelic faces. In doing so, they enkindled the flame of hope and peace in all those gathered.

There was a graduation party for the women who participated in literacy and handcraft workshops. These workshops have had a positive impact on their lives and have opened them to newer horizons. ***“I used to feel bad because I could not read a letter, now I can recognize and read the names of my medicines and I need no one’s help for that. I now have self-confidence and feel very satisfied”***, says Omayya Harah a woman who participated in the literacy workshop at the Al-Kafroun centre.

DAMASCUS

Damascus was rudely awakened in the early hours of Sunday 2nd July with bombings which took place in Tahreer square, Al-Baitara circle and near the Faculty of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering. Several people lost their lives in these attacks.

Besides there have been some other sporadic attacks/explosions recently. Notwithstanding all this, the common people show a tremendous amount of resilience to get on with their lives and to live in a more peaceful environment.

The JRS team in Damascus continues accompanying the affected people through a host of activities and programmes. Among those held recently were:

An enjoyable four-day programme in the last week of May at the Ibrahim Khalil Monastery in Keshkul for the children who come to the JRS Centres. It was truly 'end of the school year' celebration for the children. They radiated joy throughout. Some children came with their mothers and proudly demonstrated to them what they have learnt coming to the JRS centres. It was a memorable and happy event not only for the children, but also for their parents and for the animators.

Summer activities for the children are in full swing at the JRS Centres. The children are provided opportunities for joyful learning, improve their talents and engage in a hobby. Shahed Shbeib, a girl from the JRS Damascus centre, sums her experience beautifully, ***"This summer was different for me... Being in JRS centre with friends, brothers and sisters gave me another feeling, another hope, a different meaning! I do love everything here, the playing, the activities, the drawing... Every day brings new hope to me"***.

Through these many activities JRS is truly opening doors for the children



WHEN
HOPE
RETURNS

Rama's Story

Rama, a thirteen year old girl, is typical of so many other children her age and below, who belong to what is regarded as a "lost generation". These children have been living in the midst of violence; their daily bread is 'suffering' having to flee from one place to another seeking safety and security. Deprived of their childhood, they tend to become reclusive and aggressive; shunning the normal spontaneity of children who are brought up in a different environment.

Rama's story is painful: she was born and brought up in the old city of Homs.

The escalating violence forced the family (Rama, her parents and two sisters, one younger and another older) to flee. They lived in Darayya in rural Damascus, in Wadi Barada (in the one room tenement of their grandfather) and in many other places: fugitives in fear. When things got a bit better in Homs they decided to return 'home' only to find as Rama says, "We had to move at least twenty times from one place to another. When we finally returned to our 'original home' it had been completely burned down and destroyed ". But they had absolutely no choice; the family just went back to live in it. The condition of their house is absolutely pathetic: there are no doors or windows; no access to electricity or water. The neighbourhood is abandoned.

To add to their misery, Rama's father is still unemployed and the family finds it extremely difficult to make both ends meet. A major concern for Rama's mother was the education of her three daughters. The war had interrupted their schooling. The continual suffering impacted on Rama very negatively: she started becoming violent and withdrawn; she hardly smiled or interacted with others.

The JRS Centre in the Old City however became a refuge of hope. Their mother enrolled Rama and another of her daughters there. It was difficult for Rama at the beginning: she refused to mix with others; she was a lost child who preferred isolation to other children. The social worker and the animators gradually and gently reached out to her. The child protection programme and the other activities were also instrumental in helping Rama regain her self-esteem. Love and laughter came back to her life. On her transformation Rama says, *"We have suffered much and also discriminated against in the schools; here at the JRS Centre everyone is our brothers and sister. They love us and we love them all"*.

Rama's mother is unable to hide her joy and gratitude to the animators for all that they have done for Rama and the elder daughter who able to pass her exam inspite of having partial vision. *"All what we ask is the safety of our children; you at JRS have provided it; you have warmly welcomed us; you have accompanied us"*, she says very effusively and she continues, *"above all, you have returned to me my Rama the lovely girl that I used to know"*.

As for Rama she dreams of a bright future. Her joy and laughter is contagious: no one can ever miss today that sound of hope in the activities in which Rama participates in! Rama symbolizes the return of hope!