

ZA'ATARI YOUTH TASK FORCE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER. JUNE 2018

The YTF is a Za'atari based interagency action-oriented field-level forum created to promote advocacy on youth issues, coordinate relevant youth programs, as well as encourage mainstreaming of youth across other sectors.

The YTF is co-chaired by UNFPA and NRC. For more information contact lislam@unfpa.org and raed.sawalha@nrc.no



Salah's Story with Lutheran World Federation

Salah, age 13, has been attending Capoeira in District 5 at LWF's Peace Oasis for one year. Before he joined Capoeira, Salah felt like the world was against him. He lacked support from family and friends, and his loneliness often led to violence against his peers.

Capoeira is an Afro-Brazilian method designed to relieve stress and build community through music, martial arts and dance. Through this program, Salah was able to improve his self-awareness socially and his focus in school.

Salah is now an attentive and focused student, and has found friends and mentors inside Peace Oasis. He shared the following story: "A kid in my neighbourhood was vandalizing the football pitch, trying to provoke me. Instead of fighting him, I thought to myself that he is not a bad kid. I just smiled at him and walked away."

Shaza's story with Norwegian Refugee Council

"When I first came to Zaatari camp, my plan was to improve myself, I didn't want to stay at home, I refused early marriage, and in future once I graduate from university, I will hopefully continue my higher education, to help in rebuilding Syria when we return."

Shaza is a Syrian girl from Damascus, it has been five years since she arrived to Zaatari camp, she was only 14 years old when she first came to the camp, "I didn't want to leave school, and I didn't know that there were schools and education in the camp". Shaza started talking with girls and her relatives asking about schools, but none of them helped her to get enrolled in school until her mother found more information about education in the camp, where Shaza registered in the second semester of school. "I was always one of the best students back in Syria getting the best marks in school and participating in activities specialized for the best students to honor them"



Photo: Yazan Mashini. NRC Jordan

In 2017, Shaza enrolled in the NRC Youth Center courses such as ICDL (International Computer Driving License) and ILM (Institute of Leadership and Management course) because she loves to learn computer and new skills, the courses will also help her getting livelihood opportunities. She is currently attending Arizona State University (ASU) English course that will help her to improve her English. "I am trying to find a scholarship outside Jordan to continue my education, and ASU English course is helping me to improve my English."

In 2018, NRC Youth Center started an internship opportunity to help previous graduates in improving their skills for work by giving them the chance to volunteer side by side with the facilitators in the programs, Shaza applied and enrolled for two months supporting the E-learning program. "It was a great experience, I was sometimes covering the facilitator place, this gave me self-confidence because I was dealing with different ages with no problems."

"Exchange it with an Apple!"

One of the services provided by Syrian youth volunteers within the Questscope / UNFPA Youth Center is the Creativity fund for youth-led initiatives. It enables youth participants and youth from the local community to turn their ideas into reality to serve their communities. The fund has been part of the Youth Center since it opened in 2015 and has supported over 50 youth initiatives.

One excellent initiative was "Exchange it with an Apple," which was aimed at raising awareness on several topics, including health and reproductive health. The initiative was one of the most important and effective projects the Fund has supported and was carried out in January 2018. It targeted about 800 people and was implemented by around 50 young men and women. They distributed green apples accompanied by targeted messages about the importance of apples, fruit, and the benefits of healthy food. The messages also aimed to raise awareness about the harmful health effects of smoking for individuals and communities. The youth leaders distributed apples to people in the streets who were smoking, and encouraged them to exchange/give up their cigarettes and take apples instead. In this creative way, Syrian youth were able to raise awareness about the dangers of smoking, and at the same time to stress the importance of healthy food.



"Challenges are just a test for our abilities, and success requires will and patience,"

Mohammad is a 20 year-old facilitator from Zaatari camp. He first came to Jordan in 2013. "It was only two weeks left before the Tawjihi exams, things got complicated and we had to leave our city." Mohammad said.

After arriving in Zaatari things changed. "I didn't leave the caravan for almost a year, and I barely communicated with anyone. I decided that I would not pursue my education at the camp. I was telling myself why bother studying at the camp, while I can just wait till the war ends. Then I will go back home and I will continue my education," Mohammad said.

After many requests from my mother to go back to school, one day she stood at the main door and said, that's it no more work, you have to go back to school. The next day I went to the school but I was shocked when I was told that I would lose two years and go back to eleventh grade, yet that didn't stop me from attending school," he adds.

Mohammad gained back his enthusiasm, and he started volunteering at different INGO's. He received many trainings on reproductive health, gender based violence, life skills, etc. During that period, he started attending Relief International's center to receive remedial education, along with life skills and PSS. Within the same year I went through depression and I decided to stop going to school. I stayed at home for two months in which Relief International's team kept calling and visiting my home to ask about the reasons behind my absence and to convince me to come back, but I was not listening. After around another two months of RI's team following up, they made me change my mind and encouraged me to go back to school. I was late with studying, yet RI teachers didn't leave me, they came to my house and tutored me without charge."

Before a few months, a facilitator position opened at Relief International and Mohammad applied and was hired. "I proudly finished Tawjihi and I felt so happy that I fulfilled my mother's dream of continuing high school in order to go for higher education. I was also happy because I didn't let my teachers at RI down and made them proud," Mohammed said.

Preparing Pioneers

In a caravan in the sixth district of Zaatari, about twenty youth workers from around the camp met at IRD's Community Center eagerly awaiting the start of the latest *Preparing Pioneers* training session. *Preparing Pioneers* is series of five life-skills training sessions designed by Emad Abdulla, who works as a Youth Facilitator at IRD's Community and Training Center in district two. Abdulla expresses that the training series was developed out of recognizing the need to provide a new space to support and enhance the capacity of youth workers in Zaatari. *Preparing Pioneers* aims to further cultivate communication and leadership skills to bring back into their community.

It is almost the start of Ramadan; the room is filled with red-blushed cheeks from the heat and buzzing with different conversations. Abdulla settles the group down to begin the second session of the series focusing on the foundations and importance of team-building skills. Participants were then asked to form their own groups to start discussing various issues that Syrian refugees in the camp are currently struggling to navigate. With a sheet of paper, each team creates an exploratory outline of a single issue, such as child marriage, low-participation in schools, workers' rights, to



Defining Team-building with Reem Yasser Al-Rashdan.



Participants from RefuGIS and IRD Youth Committee participating in the "Salad Recipe" activity.

break down the causes and possible community-based solutions to tackle these issues. Once presentations begin, everyone is fully engaged and ready to tackle each issue as a larger team. Marwan Theeb Al-Zoubi, a RefuGIS volunteer voiced, "This team-building session truly made us start thinking seriously about problems in our community, and were ready to deconstruct the causes and find solutions for these problems. We want to start facing these problems as one to make the camp a better place to live."

The training series will continue until the beginning of June, where after participants will be encouraged to bring their knowledge and skills into the initiative based *Mobaderoun* program with the IRD Community Engagement team.

YTF Advocacy Messages:

- * Provide relevant accredited certified training (vocational and academic) programs and opportunities for preparatory courses for Higher Education that are accessible to men, women, boys and girls that are age appropriate and inclusive of gender, disability and diversity status.
- * Provide support to youth in Zaatari camp to access Education, taking into account the needs of men, women, boys and girls of different ages, abilities and diversity.
- * Open up employment opportunities as well as volunteering, internships and training for all youth in Zaatari that is age appropriate and inclusive of gender, disability and diversity status.