



just
childhood

جست نشأ بدهود



ANNUAL REPORT
2018



About Us

With *Bait al-Shams*, just.childhood is offering the children of Shatila Refugee Camp a safe space for learning and simply being a child on a continuous, reliable basis and prepare them for school. We are introducing an alternative, reformatory educational approach based on internationally developed Child Protection regulations. For us it is important to teach children from an early age that they don't need to limit themselves. The kindergarten aims at providing a vital creative outlet, which often cannot be provided by parents, and is traditionally abandoned in favor of more academic subjects by chronically underfunded schools.

In our understanding of a humanistic approach to pedagogy, learning is interdisciplinary, integrating practical, artistic and conceptual elements. Bait al-Sham's approach is based on Waldorf Early Childhood Education and emphasizes on the role of imagination in learning and developing thinking that includes a creative as well as an analytic component. We would like to provide the children the basis on which to develop into free, morally responsible and integrated individuals, and to help every child fulfill his or her unique destiny.

The Board

Wiebke Eden-Fleig

Political Scientist and initiator and founder of just.childhood. Has been working for the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Lebanon as a Program Manager and as a journalist for the German weekly die ZEIT, as well as for the Middle East Quarterly Magazine zenith.

Samir Farah

Sociologist and Journalist who worked for the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Lebanon for 40 years, 28 of those as their country representative in Beirut. He was rewarded the German Federal Cross of Merit in 2003 and the National Order of Cedars in 1988 in honor of his great social and political earnings.



Badia Baydoun

Holds a BA in Communications Arts and Sciences and a MA in Political Science. She worked as a news editor, news anchorwoman and field reporter at Tele Liban. Also she had her own radio program at Radio Libanon and worked as a news editor and news presenter for the National News Agency and for Radio Liban. Worked in all three jobs for more than 20 years. Badia Baydoun started to work as Program Manager at the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Beirut in 2001.

Mofida Al Hakim

Mofida Al Hakim is a social worker with 8 years experience as a social investigator in the National Poverty Targeting Program at the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs. She holds a PhD in social sciences from the Lebanese University and her areas of interest are human rights, immigration, unemployment and trade unions. Mofida is a newly elected board member since 2018.

Elie Karam

IT expert and manager in a multinational company. He is holding a degree in Finance.

The Staff

Wiebke Eden-Fleig
Director

Rabieh Ali El Tayeh
Program Coordinator

Khaled Sayid
Financial Consultant

Khadijeh Taha
Senior Educator

Samah Rmieh
Kindergarten Educator

Layal al Hajj Ali
Kindergarten Educator

Inas Alajouz
Kindergarten Educator

Fadia Mohammad
Kindergarten Educator

Hanaa Kublawi
Kindergarten Educator

Zeinab Moussa
Kindergarten Educator

Fatima Abdelhadi
Afternoon Program Teacher

Iman Mousa
Afternoon Program Teacher

Shadia Mohammad
Helper

Background

Already the fourth generation of Palestinian refugee's lives in a hostile environment, is denied basic human rights, and has no effective means of representation or education. Worldwide the number of protracted refugee groups is increasing; nevertheless responses to refugee situations are still driven by the assumption that they are short-term.

Originally hosting hundreds of refugees, Shatila has grown since 1949 to more than 12,000 registered Palestinian refugees. With the influx of Syrian refugees into Palestinian camps there are currently more than 22,000 people living in Shatila. It is one of the 12 official long-term camps for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, situated in a poor area of Beirut that was badly damaged during the civil war. It is probably best known of all the Palestinian camps because of the 1982 massacre in which thousands of people were killed.

The entire camp comprises one square kilometer and thus has an exceptionally high population density. After almost 70 years thousands of Palestinian refugees still live in temporary shelters in overcrowded, unsanitary camps where unemployment and poverty levels are high. The Lebanese restrictions on land for Palestinians have led to severe overcrowding in the camps. There is a lack of privacy and natural light. It is not surprising that all these factors lead to violence in many aspects of life (even in schools), drug abuse, as well as severe psychological problems.

Education is one of the most important pillars of development. But Palestinian children are only under certain circumstances allowed to visit Lebanese public schools and most families cannot afford private education. The schools run by the UN require the visit of a kindergarten, without offering any in Shatila. This again leads to very early school dropouts, because children are not able to follow the UN curriculum.

A qualitative study of the American University of Beirut in 2011 has analysed the UNRWA school dropouts in Palestinian Refugee Camps in Lebanon. By looking toward developing an intervention plan to address the rate of early school dropout in Palestinian refugee camps, the study concluded that dropping out could be prevented





through a focused action plan. Among other measures the study recommends to provide a high quality, universal preschool and full-day kindergarten.

Local Developments

As Lebanon in general is still witnessing a heightened socio-economic crisis with high unemployment rates, it is reflected in the Palestinians Camps and Gatherings as well. At the heart of the problem here is also the inability of the Lebanese state to cope with the spillover effects of the war in Syria, which was entering its 8th year. In addition to that, the US decision to substantially cut funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) has cast a dark shadow over the lives of the five million refugees it supports in Palestine, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. UNRWA and the impact it has had on the Palestinian cause have been debated, but there's little doubt that its services matter.

It provides not only food aid and shelter but crucially – in a region where refugees benefit from few political, civil or economic rights – basic education and health care. All in all, over half a million children attend UNRWA schools. This can't be taken for granted in a region where forty percent of Syrian refugee children remain out of school. Overall, 30,000 Palestinians are employed by UNRWA. In places like Lebanon where the refugees are barred from working many professions, these jobs are a lifeline. Then there's the ironic, but hardly less significant, fact that UNRWA has evolved into a tangible reminder of the international community's responsibility to uphold the refugees' right of return. Also, the Palestinian Program within UNICEF, one of Just.Childhood's donors, faced and still faces since 2017 major cuts from international donors. Thus, they have decided to minimize funding for Education Programs. During the first six months of 2018, we signed monthly contracts instead of the yearly contract as funding could not be guaranteed. As of August 2018, UNICEF has signed an eleven months contract with all its partners including Just.Childhood. These political and economic circumstances are still being reflected directly on the people, who have already been struggling for many years. Economic worries also led to more aggression and violence in the camps and especially in Shatila.

However, as opposed to the previous year we did not witness any armed fighting in the camp during the day that would have forced us to close our kindergarten. Still, the situation remains dire¹. Due to all these insecurities, the prevailing violence and unforeseen events, a rhythmic and structured day is of utmost importance for the children. The kindergarten can provide them with these structures that help cope with traumatic experiences. We as a team worked on an improved risk management in order to be as safe as possible, but at the same time as reliably open and operating as possible.



¹ Chaaban, J. et al: Socio-Economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon, published by AUB, UNRWA, 2015; <http://tinyurl.com/cayyu54>





Methodology

Our Kindergarten *Bait al-Shams* is open to all children living in Shatila, giving them a safe space for learning and simply being a child on a continuous, reliable basis, and a future of possibility and hope. The appropriate and culturally sensitive humanitarian assistance is providing a foundation for sustainable development by actively involving the target group in the planning, implementation and management process. To achieve the biggest benefit for the children, the kindergarten educators will strongly rely on the help of the parents. Such collaboration includes parent-teacher conferences, courses and lectures. The kindergarten is not only open to all children living in Beirut's Shatila Camp, but also children with special needs are, if possible, welcome in our kindergarten. Currently we have three age-mixed groups with 20 children, each lead by two qualified educators.

With our work we aim at actively protecting childhood, by respecting age- appropriate life- and development conditions and making this the base of the pedagogic daily routine. In this daily routine of the group, "good habits" are initiated and cultivated according to the need of the children for rhythm and repetition of similar actions and experiences.

The competencies in language (*Bait al-Shams* is a bilingual kindergarten using Arabic as well as English), movement, playing, learning, and social skills that need to be achieved by entering school are supported on a permanent basis through the composition of every day life. In the year before entering school the children attend a pre-school program tailored to their needs and the schools' requirements. If possible we seek cooperation with the schools to ensure a smooth entry for the children. It should be mentioned though, that this kindergarten does not aim to be a school, but a place where children are allowed to gain their first experiences outside their families in a secure environment.

In our educational approach, which follows the Waldorf Early Childhood Education, teaching is by example rather than by direct instruction and is integrated rather than subject based. In recognition of its vital role in early childhood education, children are given time to play. Emphasis is given to regular patterns of activities both within the day and over each week. The child presents a particular set of physical, emotional

and intellectual characteristics, which require a particular (empathetic) educational response in return. In *Bait al-Shams* we consider the first seven years as the period of greatest physical growth and development. At this time the young child's primary mode of learning is through doing and experiencing – he or she "thinks" with the entire physical being.

The nature of this learning should be self-motivated, allowing the child to come to know the world in the way most appropriate to his or her age – through active feeling, touching, exploring and imitating, in other words, through doing. Children are encouraged to master physical skills before abstract intellectual ones.





Summary of 2018

The year was third full academic cycle and was marked by some additions to our current program. The number of children grew to 55 with still many on the waiting list. We have conducted a number of capacity building activities for the team, developed our parent/ community project further. Beside our pre-school program for the children who are in their final year before entering school, we have started an afternoon learning support program for those children who left our kindergarten and entered school. Also, we have started renovating an additional floor for our family center, which starts in 2019.

Registration

With the start of the new academic year, the number of registered children at *Bait al-Shams* kindergarten grew to 53. We have paid attention to gender and also age-balance in our age-mixed groups. The majority of children are Palestinian from Shatila or around, but we have admitted a number of Syrian children, whose parents found refuge in the camp. For the first time we have Lebanese children as well.

As in the previous years we are officially announcing our registration dates usually in May and then follow a first-come first-serve policy, but with two constraints: if we have a sibling already registered, his or her brother or sister is prioritized. Also, the parents need to agree to our way of education and have to be willing to engage in our Parent Program for the benefit of their children. In 2018 it took longer than the previous years (and we still have two more open spaces) to fill the places. The demand is there, but many families especially from Syria were looking for a temporary space in our kindergarten, sometimes only for a couple of weeks. As we believe that our work makes more sense when the children actually stay with us for at least two years, we gave preference to the children who are staying in Shatila.

The majority of children are Palestinians from Lebanon. The selection criteria for the ones on the waiting list are as above: The child on the list's top position gets the space if an already enrolled child leaves our kindergarten. Indirect target group: The siblings of our kindergarten children, the overall community in Shatila Camp as well as other organizations working on ECE on a local and national level.



Early Childhood Education Trainings

We are in our fourth year of teacher training in the kindergarten. The concept of *Bait al-Shams* follows the guidelines of Waldorf Early Childhood Education. One training module comprises four to six days, including class observation in the morning, evaluation, lectures, artistic exercises, methodology in the afternoon. Subjects of the training are arranged on three levels:

1. PROFESSIONAL SKILLS (Methods in Waldorf Early Childhood Education; structure of day, week, year; handwork; toys; circle games; gestures; play with dolls, puppet play; paperwork; nutrition; working with parents and more.)

2. ARTISTIC EXERCISES (Painting; music; form-drawing; Eurythmy; storytelling.)
It is worth to mention that two of our educators have started a two-year training in Eurythmy at Step Together Association in Daichounieh in October 2018. At the end of the training, they will be certified by the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland². With this, we'll be able to do music education and Eurythmy in house without being dependent on additional staff.

3. BASIC CONCEPTS OF WALDORF EDUCATION (Study of human: development of the child; biography; social structures; self-education.)

The trainers, coming from Germany and Great Britain, are experts in Waldorf Early Childhood Education with professional experience for many years in Waldorf kindergartens. They all graduated from Waldorf training centers. The trainers are qualified and experienced in teaching in exceptional situations, as in foreign cultures, languages, and religion, under extraordinary conditions.

Curriculum and fields of study in the training follow the guidelines of the International Association of Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education (IASWECE).

Early Childhood Training in *Bait al-Shams* is an ongoing process. In 2018 there were

² For more information see: <https://www.goetheanum.org/en/>



four modules to improve and develop the quality of the kindergarten consistently. In addition to that, we there were two trainings conducted by the trainer Uta Stolz, a specialist for learning support and learning difficulties, for the teachers who are leading our learning support program, which started in June 2018.

Summed up, we can say that all the educators demonstrate respectful relationships with the children, which is evident in all interactions including supporting children in managing their behavior.

OTHER CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES focused on child protection organized by our donor Kindernothilfe e.V. June.

Parent Program

The Parent Teacher Project encouraged active participation of the parents in relation to their children both in Just.Childhood's kindergarten *Bait al-Shams* and at home. The project was enriched through the parents' involvement in and interaction with the concept of Waldorf Education System. The parents' interest in a variety of activities ensured their understanding of the principles of the kindergarten's non-violent and age-appropriate educational approach. This process created an environment within which the parents developed a deeper understanding of Child protection values. Monthly sessions were conducted for the parents to get familiar with Waldorf Education and to expand their creativity through developing their artistic skills. This in effect, transferred the kindergarten premises into a healthier, friendlier and safer place for parents and their children. Overall, we have been able to strengthen the relationship between parents, educators, and children, another important aspect of the healthy development of the child.



Pre-school program

This program started in September 2016 and is now in the third year. Two educators are specializing in teaching the children the essential knowledge they will need by entering the school in the following academic year. In cooperation with Waldorf class teachers at schools and educators in Germany we have developed a specially tailored curriculum for our oldest children. In a creative, flexible and age-appropriate approach the children learn the English and Arabic alphabet and numbers and do simple writing and reading exercises. The children gather once a day for one hour and learn in a separate classroom according to a structured cycle consisting of movement and concentration/studying exercise. The subjects English, Arabic, Math, and Form-drawing, are taught in so-called epochs of three weeks in a row after each other before being repeated.

Learning Support

The much-needed Learning Support Program has started in summer 2018. Since a couple of years dropping out of school has become a major concern in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) manages the primary education system in the camps. A qualitative study conducted in 2011 by the American University of Beirut³ identifies four main reasons for the rising percentage of school dropouts. First, although many Palestinian families seem to be willing to sacrifice a lot for their children's education, the daily struggle for survival in the Palestinian camps still appears to be their first priority in Lebanon. Second, dropouts and parents perceive that the UNRWA teachers and administrators are generally not caring when students start to fade out of the system. Third, the UNRWA schools are fragmented; some parts of the school system are either not working or do not exist. Fourth, corporal punishment and lack of extra-curricular activities are another factor that leads to early school dropouts.

By looking toward developing an intervention plan to address the high rate of early school dropouts, the study concluded that dropping out could be prevented through a



³ Al Hroub Anies: UNRWA School Dropouts in Palestinian Refugee Camps in Lebanon. A Qualitative Study, Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs American University of Beirut, November 2011; http://website.aub.edu.lb/ifi/public_policy/pal_camps/Documents/research_reports/20111212ifi_pc_unrwa_research_report01_hroub_english.pdf





focused action plan. One of the measures, providing a high quality, universal pre-school and full-day kindergarten we have already implemented with our Waldorf kindergarten project *Bait al-Shams*. With the Learning Support Program we aim at improving the school environment: Many students who drop out express an extreme form of unattractiveness towards and disengagement from UNRWA schools (for example: poor attendance, academic difficulties, and a poor sense of belonging combined with a general dislike for school). Therefore, effective prevention strategies must include improved counseling services, quality conditions for teaching and lifelong learning, class size reduction, and rigorous and (Palestinian student) relevant school curricula.

With the support of Uta Stolz, we developed a concept for a healthy learning support after school. During the development process, the trainer gave a theoretical framework considering actual scientific aspects and anthroposophical insights. The observations and ideas of the teachers and the special educational challenges of Shatila and the project were considered and channeled into the general concept. At the same time, didactic approaches, games and activities were tested and the teachers gave them their own scent routed in their culture and insights. All the team joined the first training.

The training first focused on the seven learning processes around school readiness (perception, connection, elaboration, individualization, practice, transfer and creativity) and their metamorphosis during school readiness. This quite theoretical approach was a challenge for everyone in the beginning. However within the flow of the training, everybody was convinced that we just needed that very framework in order to be able to structure our ideas about how to support the Shatila children with their learning.

In the end, six basic activities for the rhythm of the after school program were defined

free play

guided activity in periods according to season

eating together

homework in groups

labs for language, movement and mathematics

excursion

One of the most difficult steps was to realize that we have to consider the rhythm of the whole day in order to offer a healthy surrounding in the afternoon. To keep the balance between necessary learning support and the need of the children to breathe out and recover in free play seemed quite a challenge.

Besides providing the support needed at school, safe spaces like *Bait al-Shams* kindergarten provide an opportunity for refugee children from Syria to begin recovering from the experience of their displacement, and to access support for their psychosocial and emotional wellbeing. Especially Palestinian children from Syria, whose families have relocated to the Palestinian camps in Lebanon and are coping with their second, often third displacement, need targeted support. In the afternoon we have two Syrian children who are not enrolled in school as no Lebanese school accepted them. We try and provide them with extra support in order to bridge the gap until they are hopefully enrolled. The Palestinian children from Syria were all admitted to the UNRWA schools, the Syrian children have to attend a Lebanese school, which decides due to its capacities⁴.

⁴ see for example: Human Rights Watch: Lebanon: Stalled Effort To Get Syrian Children in School. Donors, Education Ministry Should Fulfill Their Promise, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/12/13/lebanon-stalled-effort-get-syrian-children-school>





Outcomes

- Children are developing strong relationships with the staff, which is evident in improved confidence, and engagement with learning
- System of child observation has been developed (Child case studies, home visits)
- The educators demonstrate respectful relationships with the children which is evident in all interactions including supporting children in managing their behavior
- Children are demonstrating curiosity and resilience
- Parents are more familiar with our methodology; absorb the curriculum and follow-up with their children and their siblings at home
- Closely working with parents to establish a social link through participation in supporting their children in kindergarten and beyond
- Healthy environment
- Parents are involved and responsible
- Children are prepared for school
- Evaluation standards developed
- Child Protection Policy developed



Outlook 2019

One of the major changes will be finding new donors to support the overall costs of the kindergarten and its additional programs. Other than that we reported on the second year of a three-year project so far. We will continue in the way we are working for now.

THIS BASICALLY MEANS:

- To move forward with expected program put down by team and trainers
- Advancing community work
- Extending the system of milestones to be achieved concerning the development of the children/developing tools to measure success
- Developing the best-practice approach by developing strategies for opening more kindergarten branches in the other Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon (Baalbek as a first step)
- Continue intensive training
- Strengthen the fundraising plan towards more independence from political circumstances/ visibility

CONCLUSION:

In a nutshell, despite the challenges that come with the environment we are working in, the team could look back to another successful year. The work with the children continued very well, we could again recognize positive changes especially regarding social and behavioral matters within a relatively short period of time. Especially with some special cases of children, who were forced to flee from Syria, and who were in a state of shock and freeze and who gradually found their way into movement and expression. In general, children became more peaceful and at ease and started to develop trust towards their educators and the kindergarten itself. Challenges however are still being faced with the parents at times, which require a close follow-up and instruction. Nevertheless, the Parent Program had a positive impact on the involvement and care of the parents towards their children.

Just.Childhood consists of people who have many years experience working with social or political-related work within Lebanon in general and its current refugee and host community context in specific. The staff working in Shatila Camp is all from





the respective community. With the additional programs like the Parent/Community Awareness and Learning support mainly, we were able to support and strengthen the effectiveness of the overall ECE project. Follow-up strategies to evolve from best practice to a larger scale project, possibly in other refugee camps in Lebanon, and, if possible regionally, will be developed additionally.

We need to develop and strengthen the network of Waldorf schools and kindergartens mainly in Germany and Europe, in order to have alternative funding possibilities so to avoid further dependency on international donor organizations.

We started on spreading the idea of our educational approach beyond our kindergarten activities. The staff teamed up with a kindergarten project in Gaza, Palestine. They are sharing their experiences and are tutoring their colleagues in Palestine. We did a consultancy in Jordan, where Early Childhood Education is getting a lot of attention in the context of the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals⁵. Furthermore, at the end of 2018, Just.Childhood was asked to take over a kindergarten in Baalbek established by one of its partner organizations called Inaash. They would like to change their educational approach and asked Just.Childhood to manage the kindergarten, which currently hosts 240 children.

Our goal to move from best practice to common-practice in terms of Early Childhood Education as well as growing expertise in Elementary Education is getting closer. Also, the team is more confident and is working closely with the parents to establish a social link through participation in supporting their children in the kindergarten and beyond. We were able to create a healthy environment for educators, children and parents. In general the team is much more active and is taking responsibilities more naturally. This, at the same time reflects on the parents, who learn about their children's rights, their own rights and ways of articulating them beyond the kindergarten routine.

⁵ Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, A/RES/70/1; <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>

Success stories

Rana Gokhlob

5 YEARS, BEES GROUP



From the beginning Rana needed special attention. Physically her muscles were very weak, she was moving very slow, was inactive, she suffers from overweight, and she always had sad facial expressions. In the morning she came to the kindergarten crying and refusing to enter the class.

Her behavior within the group was difficult. She was indifferent to the words of the educators. She played in a random and unorganized manner, and was far away from the other children in her class who refused to play with her, because she was acting in a hostile way. She was only playing with her cousin, and when playing time was finished she was sitting away in order not to help to tidy up or arrange the toys. Often she refused to complete the activities until the end; frequently she didn't participate in the morning circle and refused to sing unless she was standing next to the educator. She ate in a random and extremely untidy way without being able to stop. Frequently she had to throw up from overeating.

With time though, the activities within the kindergarten have contributed to her wellbeing. During free play, and especially in the home corner she strengthened her relationship with the other children, through group play and role-playing she started feeling responsible for the younger children and showing it by helping and caring for them. The educators supported and encouraged this and now she even tidies up with a smile on her face.

Activities like painting and felting helped in discharging her negative energy. The outside activities made her calmer and more patient and less aggressive. Her muscles developed as well as her overall body structures. The other children now accept her and she stopped her habit of beating.

Story telling has been one of the main activities that helped her. The stories taught her about the importance of listening to parents and educators, and the importance of collaboration, arrangement, etc. In cooperation with her parents, the educators made a schedule for healthy meals for her.





Mohammed Abou Shelieh
5 YEARS, BUTTERFLY GROUP

Muhammad was extremely hyperactive and not able to sit without movement for a minute. From the beginning he spoke in a very slang language and used inappropriate words. He used to try and beat the other children and throw things at them. His extreme need to move kept him from being able to finish any activity he has started. The educators gave him room to play and move whenever he needed to. At the same time he was encouraged to express what he wants or what he would like to play. He was given tasks within the groups.

The Kindergarten activities and the overall structured and rhythmic system helped him a lot. For example, the activity of stringing beads and painting (he painted what bothers him for example) calmed him down. Playing, climbing and jogging on the roof helped getting rid of his excess energy.

Muhammad stopped speaking inappropriate words and apologizes directly if he did something wrong to his friends. He helps them if needed. He is able to play and focus in one corner of the play house, he creates stories, he is building and creating many forms and buildings with the wooden blocks in the kindergarten. He is helping especially the new children with wearing their shoes or eating. He helps in arranging the class, and he is able to complete any activity to the end.

Donors 2018



Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH



التعاون
Taawon



IASWECE
International Association for
Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education

Annual Budget for all Programs

STAFF COSTS:	121 .400 USD
OPERATIONAL/ADMINISTRATIONAL EXPENSES:	108.042 USD
TOTAL:	229.442 USD

