



TENT SCHOOLS INTERNATIONAL

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A safe school for every refugee child

Wheels of Change campaign powers schools in the Middle East

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE: Laptops for teachers in Ukraine | Wish List 2023

Student numbers grow in Jordan as families continue to flee Iraq

The need for a school bus is urgent as new children arrive from a distant neighborhood.

You've likely heard of Petra, an ancient city carved from rose-colored rock, now a stunning tourist destination helping to power Jordan's economy. But tourists aren't the only crowds attracted to this Middle Eastern country. Jordan hosts refugees from 57 nations and is viewed as a safer destination than Lebanon or Egypt, where the economies are increasingly erratic.

Embedded in Jordan's capitol city of Amman, Good Shepherd Center holds its own amid the chaos of a popular host nation. The school recently completed its seventh year of delivering quality education to Iraqi families targeted by ISIS in northern Iraq. As the Christian minority, these families saw their homes and businesses destroyed because

of their faith and, at this point, they do not feel safe enough to return. This crisis has created a community of Iraqis in Amman who lack essential services enjoyed by Jordanians. One of them is education.

Al-Hashemi is an under-served area for Iraqis, and families are desperate to get their children back in school.

Good Shepherd is filling this urgent need and doing it well, supported by a local church and its partners. The school's greatest strength is customized care for students, including special education for children with

disabilities and post-trauma symptoms. Full-time special education instructors are rare in Jordan, but Principal Dawlat Hijazeen recently hired one, and everyone on staff is trained in sensory approaches, music, art and movement to rehabilitate students and meet them where they are. Teachers have also worked hard in 2021-2022 to help students catch up after losing ground during the pandemic.

Good news spreads quickly among Iraqis in Amman, and as seven school families were relocated to Australia in 2021, open spots were immediately filled when extended families of the student body made their own escape from Iraq. Last fall, Good Shepherd had 119 students, mostly Iraqis fleeing religious persecution. The student body has now grown to 136.

Of those, 55 children are from Al-Hashemi, a neighborhood 20 minutes away by car. An especially under-served area for Iraqis, families there are desperate to get their children back in school. Principal Hijazeen witnessed this need and responded by prioritizing transportation to Good Shepherd for Al-Hashemi kids.

"We have a van that travels there three to five times each morning to transport the children, with long waits for them in between," said Hijazeen.

Due to the influx of children from Al-Hashemi, Good Shepherd



Upper left and bottom: Iraqi students at Good Shepherd Center in Jordan

Upper right: Principal Dawlat Hijazeen with TSI staffer Rawan Haddad in Jordan, July 2022

needs a school bus. They hope to welcome more students from this area soon; a bus would transport 22 children in one trip, over double the number they can now serve in the school van. The purchase of a bus would be an investment of \$60,000.

Good Shepherd is requesting our prayers and support for a bus purchase in 2023. They pledge to cover maintenance costs, one year of insurance, and license and registration for the vehicle. Supporters can also help by covering the van's fuel costs for one year at \$1,000 a month.

Despite its larger capacity, the U.S. hosts far fewer refugees than Middle Eastern countries like Jordan. As a supporter of Tent Schools International, you are enabling your brothers and sisters in Christ to "welcome the stranger", wherever they are. Thank you! •

The Wheels of Change campaign will ensure children get to school in Amman. The goal is to raise \$60,000 for Jordan this year. Join us! Use the enclosed envelope or visit TentSchoolsInt.org/give.



An Iraqi neighborhood in Amman, Jordan

PROGRESS FOR PATRICK

Patrick is seven years old. Born with a mental condition that left him non-verbal and aggressive, his family left Iraq six months ago to find better medical services for him in Jordan.

Dawlat Hijazeen, principal at Good Shepherd Center, heard about Patrick's condition from Iraqi community members. After learning he was not in school, she scheduled a home visit with the family to find out if Good Shepherd would be a good fit for Patrick.

"The mother had taken him to many doctors in Iraq, but none could help him. I told her, 'Your son can join our school and we'll see if we can help.'"

Initially there was no improvement for Patrick, so the staff found a local center that would assess and potentially diagnosis him.

"Each day we take a new approach. We won't give up on him." - **Dawlat Hijazeen**

"I sent him two days a week to this center and three days to Good Shepherd," said Hijazeen. "There was still no improvement and no diagnosis. So the family stopped sending him to us."

Hijazeen was discouraged, but she couldn't get Patrick out of her mind. She visited the family again, inviting him into the care of the

new special education teacher. To her relief, his mother agreed. After a hearing test, which he passed with flying colors, Patrick's teacher began using picture cards with him, encouraging him to repeat phrases and practice pronunciation. Patrick's progress is slow, but there have been breakthroughs.

"It has not been easy to reach him, but the teachers keep trying," said Hijazeen. "Sometimes he will interact, other times he won't. Each day we take a new approach. We won't give up on him." •

Patrick's story is still unfolding. Please keep him, his family and his teachers in your prayers!



WHEELS OF CHANGE IN LEBANON

A mobile school expands its ministry in Lebanon, bringing education to a new camp and launching a vocational sewing program for Syrian girls. The needs are great, and this school-on-wheels delivers food and medicine, too.

Lebanon is experiencing one of the worst economic downturns globally since the mid-19th century*, a result of years of state corruption, waste and poor financial policies. For ministries in Lebanon, a solution-mindset is the greatest skill anyone can have according to Sayeed Milan, half of the father-son team leading Warm Heart Lebanon.

"We are taking it to another level with that," Sayeed said. "We have power cuts every day, we live on emergency generators all the time. We are [still] benefiting our community because we are flexible."

The mobile school funded by TSI supporters is part of that flexible approach. This nimble cargo truck converts to three classrooms per camp during the week, then morphs into a food delivery service and medical clinic on weekends. A holistic approach keeps families engaged in their children's education while meeting urgent needs that Sayeed and his father, Pastor Joseph,

"We are doing this with one heart and a big smile. The only burden is finding resources."

- Sayeed Milan, Warm Heart Lebanon

cannot overlook in Bekaa Valley, an area with the world's highest concentration of Syrian refugees.

Sayeed shares that the time he spends with the children and their families - through food delivery, medical services, and schooling - creates the feeling that they are one extended family. "We start to really care about them," he said. "If they don't have food or clothes, if there is a hole in one of their shoes, we feel like it's our responsibility. I will go home, check my closet, see if there is something that would fit a student that I can spare. It becomes personal."

Joseph sees their work together as no different than that of Jesus. "We couldn't close our eyes to the need. If you want to reach out [with schooling], you have to feed them like Jesus did. He performed

miracles and fed the people. He healed their sicknesses, raised their dead, because he was full of compassion. You cannot teach children and then close your heart to their other needs. It's the whole package."

Sayeed and Joseph say the only burden is finding the resources to meet the deep needs in the camps. But they do it with one heart and a big smile, in Sayeed's words. He has been working with his father in the camps since his teens. "It's wonderful to see the kids grow, kids that I personally knew when they were babies," he said.

The mobile school is currently serving three classes per day with 25 children in each class. There is a television inside to introduce languages. Outside there are two sections, one for writing and the



Left: Syrian boys who attend the mobile school
Right: Students gather in the interior classroom



other for math. Handcrafts and art are incorporated, too. Warm Heart is now poised to expand ministry to another camp and will replicate these services there, hinging on the hire of a second teacher.

As the seasons change, so do school routines. Many children are absent during harvest time as they work in the fields owned by camp leaders. Warm Heart's flexible approach again brings solutions to this problem.

"In the morning we teach children from one camp and in the evening we teach the kids from another camp who are back from the fields," said Sayeed. "It's illegal for them to work so young, but we are facing camp leaders who don't want them to have education because then they won't benefit from their work. We are fighting back on that and we aren't being quiet about it. We will stop them so they can't take advantage of the children."

The weather brings other limits to services - there is no avoiding the cold of winter. Instruction will continue in the heated interior of the truck with rotating classes, but student numbers drop during the coldest months. Some classes are held in family tents offered by parents to help remedy the weather issue. "Between their tents and our truck, we will continue," said Sayeed.

Along with an annual surge of students in spring, the future looks bright for the mobile school, including plans to launch a sewing class for Syrian girls. In winter girls can participate in vocational training in a house Sayeed and Joseph have rented nearby. Warm Heart has long offered electrical training for boys, gifting those who finish the course with their own tool kit. "I want to give a chance to every girl, too," said Sayeed. "When they are older they will be prepared [with a skill to use in adulthood.]"

The two men laugh and shake their heads when they think of the mobile school's success in Bekaa Valley. They knew it was a promising idea, but when the Lebanese army called for advice on how to facilitate vocational training and medical services on-the-go, they knew they were getting somewhere.

"We gave them details on how we designed the truck," said Sayeed. "It's a school during the week, but we've used it as a clinic in two villages. We recently reached about 200 patients in two days. We respond to whatever need is there." •

The Wheels of Change campaign will deliver safe schools to refugee children in Bekaa Valley. The goal is to raise \$51,500 for Lebanon this year. Join us! Use the enclosed envelope or visit TentSchoolsInt.org/give.

*Source: World Bank

Abdo's Story

Until recently, 17-year-old Abdo would escape his family's cramped tent in Bekaa Valley to sleep in the streets, finding field work for area farmers during the day. His parents were worried he was not in school or at home, but they were exhausted from their own work in the fields and caring for Abdo's sister, who has a disability.

Then Abdo discovered the mobile school operating in his family's camp. Wearing his only set of clothing, he accepted Sayeed Milan's invitation to attend. At first some of his peers gave him a hard time

about choosing school over field work, but Abdo liked school. The opportunity to learn brought joy back into his life.

"He was hard to deal with at first, but he changed at a remarkable speed," said Sayeed. "He impressed his teachers and put tremendous effort in on both the academic level and on a personal level."

Sayeed tells the story of a phone call he received from Abdo's father one day. "He was asking permission for Abdo to be absent for two days because his father needed to see a sick aunt and Abdo needed to care for his sister while his dad was away," said Sayeed. "He said, 'If you



Abdo with Rawan Haddad in Lebanon

do not grant Abdo permission, I will not go.' This made my heart dance with joy because his father appreciates what we're doing and he takes his son's education very seriously. Abdo is one of the students for whom we have high hopes." •

Ukrainian students return to school in Bucha

An update and letter of gratitude from Alina Tolbas, school director in Ukraine

The Russian invasion of Ukraine forced students and staff at Academy of Wisdom in Bucha to scatter. Many student families had already fled an invasion in eastern Ukraine five years prior; this is their second displacement. TSI sent urgent funds in spring to support the school.

Dear TSI supporters, I want to thank you for your desire to help our school. We hope to continue to provide educational services, help children and their families, and tell them about the love of Jesus for them.

After the Russian invasion of Bucha on February 24, the school council made the decision to cancel parent fees for educational services. Our school is a non-profit organization supported by tuition, but with the dedication of our teachers we continued to instruct students online after they were displaced. Although we did not have enough funds to pay



Academy of Wisdom students met online while scattered across Europe in 2022

the staff, we believed the most important thing was to retain our students, wherever they were. We went forward with faith that God would provide at the right time.

At that time we had 30 teachers and 16 employees. Unfortunately, some staff members lost their opportunity to teach as they fled the invasion, and in the end they had to resign. Today we are down to 20 teachers and 14 employees.

One of the greatest answers to our prayers was your offer to help. With your donations, we were able to purchase 10 laptops for the remaining teachers,

which were necessary for them to continue their work. We were then able to spend the rest of the funds on part of our teacher salaries in August.

In order to retain as many students as possible, we are now offering in-person, online, family-based and externship forms of education. Parents of first graders voted for in-person learning in the majority, so we gave them the opportunity to study within the walls of the school in Bucha. Now we have 170 students: 115 studying online, 35 in the family form of study, two in the external form of study and 18 first graders

SHOP REFUGEE-MADE

This season, give a gift that empowers! Our TentSchoolsShop supports Iraqi artisans whose children attend Good Shepherd Center in Jordan. Proceeds from sales of these beautiful items benefit families and the school.

Find us at www.TentSchoolsShop.Etsy.com and @tentschools.shop on Instagram.

At right: Haifa is the primary earner for her family. She sews purses and backpacks made of traditional Bedouin fabric.



who are in-person. We lost some students when they fled to other countries and it was understood they would not return to Ukraine.

With the start of the new school year, we waived the entrance fee for new students but resumed a minimal tuition requirement on September 1. Most students were provided with an additional discount of 50%. These families had multiple children in our school system, children with disabilities, or they were unable to pay the full amount due to financial need. This leaves only a small portion of parents who are able to pay full tuition.

We feel for those children who are now studying in-person in Bucha. It was a risk to start studying at the school site. We have done everything possible for the safety of the children and now leave everything in God's hands. We built a bomb shelter for the in-person students and kindergarten children. When the air raid alarm sounds the children go there with their teachers to wait out the danger.

We would be grateful for your continued support for our school. We need to pay our teachers and other employees as the work of the school is impossible without them. We also have challenges with utility bills. But we believe that this is God's work and He will not leave us. Thank you for your help with funding so far – getting that felt like a safe space for us. You feel safer when someone wants to help you. •

Alina Tolbas lives in resettled housing in Germany with her family, where she has been working from home since February. She visits Bucha periodically and hopes someday to return.

WISH LIST 2023

Make a global impact this season. See what your support will do in the year ahead!



Operating costs for a mobile school
\$32,000



Emergency food boxes for refugee families for a week
\$700



Arts & craft supplies to support instruction
\$900



Teacher training to better serve students with special needs
\$2,000



Home computer for a resettled family with school-aged children
\$95

GIVE ONLINE TODAY AT [TENTSCHOOLSINT.ORG/GIVE](https://tentschoolsint.org/give).



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629 Ionia Ave. SW
Grand Rapids, MI 49503



INSIDE: WHEELS OF CHANGE IN THE MIDDLE EAST



BACK TO SCHOOL.

Your support gets refugee kids back in school. For them, this represents a return to safety, normalcy, and the chance for a bright future. Thank you for your support of this important work!

TentSchoolsInt   

CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEBSITE! TentSchoolsInt.org got a makeover. Take a look and let us know what you think!



Tent Schools International™

A / 629 Ionia Ave. SW
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

P / (616) 531-9102

W / tentschoolsint.org

PRESIDENT

Scott Vander Kooy svanderkooy@tentschoolsint.org

EDITOR

Emily Klooster eklooster@tentschoolsint.org

DEVELOPMENT

Rawan Haddad rhaddad@tentschoolsint.org

DONOR SERVICES

Kathy Fauble kfauble@tentschoolsint.org

ACCOUNTING

Karen Hilverda khilverda@tentschoolsint.org

OUR MISSION

TENT SCHOOLS INTERNATIONAL demonstrates the love of Jesus for displaced children through safe, compassionate schools.

TENT SCHOOLS INTERNATIONAL is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and a proud member of ECFA, the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA.org).