



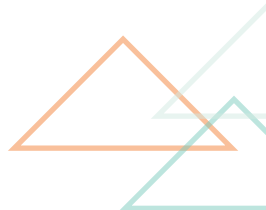
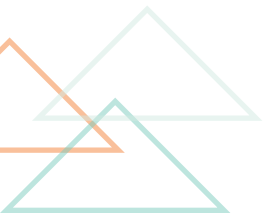
# TENT SCHOOLS INTERNATIONAL

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER | SPRING 2024



## Light in the darkest places

Ongoing conflict, massive displacement,  
and the refugee search for home.



- There are **110 million forcibly displaced people** worldwide due to persecution, conflict, and human rights violations.

## DIRECTOR'S REPORT: THE ISRAEL-HAMAS CONFLICT

Here is a glimpse of the work of Tent Schools International through a different lens: the lived experiences of our partners in the Middle East as they work amidst political conflict. These are the Christian leaders who pursue our mission, often at great personal cost.

### Lebanon: Warm Heart School in Bekaa Valley

Submitted by Joseph Milan, pastor and co-founder, serving Syrian refugees

Lebanon is bordered by Syria to the northeast and Israel to the south. It is the smallest recognized sovereign state on the Asian continent and second only to Turkey as a host nation for Syrian refugees.

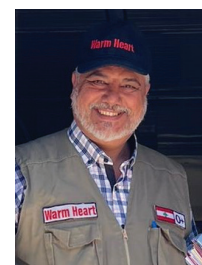
Lebanon is at war. The Israel-Hamas war is only 1.5 hours away from us here in Beirut. There are no more tourists, no more work, and the schools are closing. The conflict is spreading and getting stronger. There are new taxes and everything is expensive.

I am asked daily [by Syrians] for help, and I'm overwhelmed with the needs. I pray, "God, how can

I answer all of this need?" But I cannot close my heart to them.

In our ministry to Syrian students, we are using biblical curriculum; we talk about the New Testament and Jesus Christ. They are like family to us, and I miss them when I don't see them. The secret police in Lebanon are putting a lot of pressure on us because they don't want us to support

Syrians anymore, but Syrians have nowhere to go, and we feel pressure from Europe to keep them in Lebanon. Most Lebanese resent this. But I have a calling [to help] Syrians. I won't leave Lebanon unless God changes my mission. •



Joseph Milan

### Jordan: Marka Education Center in Amman

Submitted by Haytham Mazareh, pastor and founder, serving displaced Iraqi families

Jordan is home to the largest number of Palestinian refugees in the world. It is bordered by Syria to the north, Iraq to the east, and Israel to the west. The West Bank adjoins Jordan's western border.

Jordan is very affected by the war. We have increasing prices due to delays in Red Sea shipping. Jordan imports 98% of our products, and now we can't do that. It's so discouraging.

American businesses are not being supported by Palestinian customers, but these businesses employ Jordanians. People are hungry because they've lost their jobs.

Since 2015, we have had waves of refugees in Jordan. One of these has been Iraqis. Our Iraqi students told us they were depressed when school was not in session, so now we have school year-round.

We offer more than formal education. Iraqis cannot work in Jordan, so we give them dignity, tools, materials, and training. Parents have become

professionals and we sell their products to support their families and the school. There is spiritual growth in their children, too. Kids are leaders and servants in the church. I am so grateful to see them grow in faith. •



Haytham Mazareh  
with his daughter in  
Jordan

- 52% of all displaced people are from three countries: **Syria, Afghanistan, and Ukraine.**



- Nearly half of all displaced people are **children**, and almost half of those children are **not in school**.

## NEW PARTNER REPORT

# Burundian Pastor Brings Education To His Own

Born a refugee, Norbert Mbwiliza runs a Christian NGO in Katumba Camp, Tanzania

Founded in 1972, Katumba Camp in Tanzania is the oldest refugee camp in the world, hosting 84,000 refugees from Burundi who have fled civil unrest. Many residents have spent their entire lives in the camp.

Norbert Mbwiliza was born in Tanzania in 1973, one year after his parents fled Burundi.

"One of the things I will never forget: a non-refugee neighbor's goat ate my mother's corn, and instead of my mother being compensated, she was arrested and brought to the police station," Norbert said. "This showed me how difficult the life of a refugee is."

As Norbert grew older, he was able to go to school with the help of UNHCR, receiving his teacher's certificate after graduation. A sense of purpose began to reveal itself in Norbert's life, sourced from his childhood experiences as a refugee.

"I wanted to defend refugees like me in Tanzania," he said. "In 1999 I started the ministry of Norbert and Friends, teaching refugees to

live by faith and rely on God."

Norbert and Friends, a new partner of TSI, supports Msaginya Primary School and Tumaini Secondary School, serving 1,500 displaced children in Katumba Camp. The goal is to help them heal from past trauma so they can excel in school. •



Norbert Mbwiliza



Maria Petrova in Bucha, Ukraine

Maria Petrova is a 7th grader whose family was forced to move from the city of Kherson, Ukraine to Bucha. Russian troops occupied Kherson in 2022 and 2023 destroying much of the town's infrastructure, including a nearby dam. Maria's home was flooded, and around the same time, both of her parents lost their jobs. The move meant Maria could no longer attend her local school, adding to the stress the

## School Feels Like Home to Maria

A 7th grader receives a warm welcome at a school in Ukraine

In 2022, Bucha, Ukraine was one of the first outlying areas of Kyiv taken by Russian forces. Academy of Wisdom serves families displaced by the Russian invasion and ongoing conflict, including Maria, a student from the city of Kherson.

family had experienced during Kherson's occupation.

"I felt heavyhearted, and lonely," Maria said. "In Bucha, I began attending Academy of Wisdom. I was anxious about what my class would be like, and if I would be able to find friends," she confided. "But when I came to my new school for the first time, I was warmly welcomed."

At Academy of Wisdom, Maria noticed cozy classrooms and teachers who felt safe. "The

teachers are kind and wise," she said. "They love God, and they teach us to do the same."

Maria loves beginning each school day with "morning inspiration", stories that reveal God and His love for people. She is also a member of the student government and Pathfinders Club. "These opportunities help me forget the difficult times of my past," she said. "We study the Bible, learn life skills, and help those in need. I feel comfortable at school; it's like home." •

- 75% of refugees are hosted in low and middle-income countries, many in the **Middle East**. (Source: UNHCR 2023)

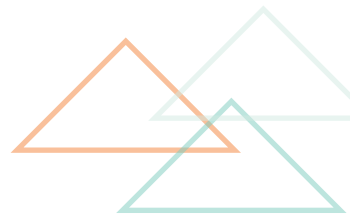


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INTERNATIONAL

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**WHEN SCHOOL FEELS LIKE *home.***



## THANK YOU.

Your support shows refugee kids they have value by getting them back in school, giving them the chance for a hopeful future.

**WE'RE GROWING.** Contact us about joining our Board of Directors!

@TentSchoolsInt



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HAVENS OF PEACE AND OPPORTUNITY

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### OUR MISSION

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

We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and a proud member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA.org).

