



TENT SCHOOLS INTERNATIONAL

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER | SUMMER 2024



The return of childhood.

Refugee schools help children feel safe to be kids again, despite war.

Syrian girls rise above anxiety to take back childhood.

As conflict bleeds into southern Lebanon and economic stress rises, Warm Heart's message to Syrian parents is, "Let them learn first; a job will come later."

Lebanon is facing its worst socio-economic crisis in decades. Ongoing conflict in the south between Israel and Hezbollah*, a result of the Israel-Hamas war, is hitting vulnerable populations hard with disruptions to supply chains and limited access to food, healthcare, and education. Nine out of ten Syrian refugees need humanitarian aid to cover their basic needs, and clashes along Lebanon's southern border have displaced over 86,600 people, including Syrians.

Anxiety runs high, for everyone. Economic hardship in Lebanon means many Syrian parents feel compelled to send their children to work. Joseph Milan, co-founder of TSI partner Warm Heart, drives from camp to camp in Bekaa Valley delivering medicine and food to school families. Children work in the fields along his route. "Years ago, I started our first vocational training classes [for Syrians]," he said. "I discourage parents from sending their kids straight to work. Let them learn first. A job will come later."

Joseph's life is defined by his willingness to help families through tough times. Along with food and medicine, he picks up sewing supplies for the vocational class run by his wife, Lidia Agha, out of the mobile school funded by TSI donors in 2022. The girls in Lidia's class are thrilled with their chance to learn and embrace childhood.

"They started with curtains, then pillows," Lidia said. "Now they sew their own clothes, they hem,

mend, and fix zippers. They will use these skills in the future, as moms to save money for their families, or to start a business."

Parents see the value of the training, and mothers often want to take classes alongside their daughters. Joseph says his team treats each student like a daughter of the King. "They were discouraged before, now they have dignity and hope," he said.

"All need love at the beginning. They see we are different."

- Lidia Agha

One Syrian mom is relieved to have found Warm Heart. "My daughter was in another school, and they called to tell me she was lazy," she said. "Now, my daughter is happy and accepted. She loves it here."

The hope Warm Heart offers is challenged by the political climate in the south of Lebanon, which Joseph says is similar to Gaza. Lebanon hosts the largest number of refugees in the world per capita, and poverty there has tripled in the past decade. Crime rates are high and some Lebanese blame refugees for the country's troubles.

"The conflict [in the south] is nearer and wider every day. People are tired

and depressed," said Joseph. "It's dangerous right now. The government is divided, but the majority are saying, 'We want Syrians out.'"

The Warm Heart team continue to serve Syrians against government wishes, moving families to secure locations and using their contacts with the government and in hospitals despite pushback. "The fruits are what motivate us," Joseph said. "We hear: 'Your children are different. They look healthy, their clothes are clean, they are joyful.'" Lidia added, "All need love at the beginning. They see we are different. Why are we helping them? Because we love them." • Please pray for Lebanon.

Clockwise: a) A salon class for Syrian girls. b) A student shows her work around Christmas. c) Lidia Agha teaches sewing in Bekaa Valley.



*Hezbollah operates as both a Shiite Muslim political party and a militant group. It has significant power in Lebanon. (Source: Center for Foreign Relations - CFR.org)

A mother's words



The Gordienko family

My name is Nataliya Gordienko. My children, Anna and Makar, have been at Academy of Wisdom (AOW) since 2018. After the first day of school, they hurried to class with joy to be with their friends and teachers. They love school!

We were in limbo for two weeks after the outbreak of full-scale war in February, 2022. It was difficult to plan our future because our home was under Russian occupation and we were evacuated to western Ukraine. Despite the challenging circumstances, the school resumed classes quickly. It was remote learning, but it allowed the children to reunite, concentrate on their studies, and fight for their future.

We are grateful to Academy of Wisdom for waiving tuition fees during that time. It was a tremendous help to our family. Our children continued to receive an education from the best teachers, who, in times of danger, provided children with quality classes and a sense of normalcy. Even when the blackouts began in October, teachers did not abandon their students. They called, wrote, and, most importantly, recorded the lessons so the children could learn when we had daylight and internet access. It is impossible to overestimate the work of a teacher; they worked at night

so the children could review the lessons during the day because of electricity outages.

I am also grateful to the school for hosting gatherings of students and teachers every month during this dark and cold winter. My children were able to meet with their friends, talk, give hugs, play games, and do interesting research. They always left these gatherings happy and inspired. I never stop thanking God and the staff for providing my children with the opportunity to get an

education and feel safe during this difficult time. These are miracles from God. • Thank you for supporting teachers and students in Ukraine!



AOW students take part in a choir shortly before the Russian invasion of 2022.

CATCH THE VISION ON THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME.

See the work of Tent Schools International firsthand on a Vision Trip to Jordan.

DISCOVER THE MAGIC.

Our experienced guides will take you on a journey from the iconic rock city of Petra to the bustling markets of Amman. Savor delicious Middle Eastern food and warm hospitality!

FORM LASTING RELATIONSHIPS.

You'll meet our partners, the principal, teachers, and students at Marka Education Center serving displaced Iraqi children. Connect with student families as you deliver care packages.

BRUSH UP ON YOUR TUTORING SKILLS.

Volunteer in Marka's classrooms as you work with students one-on-one or support teachers in English or art therapy classes. Meet the kids behind the mission!

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR SUMMER 2025 TRIP!

Contact Vision Trip coordinator Rawan Haddad at (616) 866-8260 or by email at rhaddad@tentschoolsint.org.





SAFE TO BE A *kid again.*

COVER AND BACK PAGE IMAGES: Syrian students from Warm Heart School in Bekaa Valley, Lebanon.



THANK YOU.

Your support gets refugee kids back in school, giving them safety today, and hope for tomorrow.

Here comes the bus!



TSI's GoFundMe campaign is using crowdsourcing to fund a bus that will transport displaced Iraqi students to school from a distant neighborhood in Amman. Learn more and give today at GoFund.Me/645b3d13.

@TentSchoolsInt   



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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).

