

December 2020

NEWSLETTER

New Academic Year, New Challenges, New Accomplishments!

A New Academic Year for the Tahaddi Education Center



*A pandemic... economic collapse... a massive explosion... unstable electricity, limited, slow- internet, crowded homes and no proper devices...
... yet*
DESPITE THE MANY CHALLENGES, TAHADDI IS COMMITTED TO KEEPING CHILDREN LEARNING!

Remote education is new and difficult for students around the world. However, for children like those in Hay el Gharbeh it is nearly impossible. Students lack laptops, tablets or mobile phones to work from. Homes are noisy, crowded and uncomfortable. Families do not have access to stable electricity, let alone internet. However, the biggest risk for many of our children is that they would need to go out and work in order to earn an income for their families.

Lebanon's economic collapse has meant that most parents are now out of work. In the best of times, families live day to day. The majority work as daily laborers either in construction, in the food business or in cleaning, and much of these industries are in sharp decline. As the situation has become increasingly dire, with inflation reaching over 60% even on essential food items, families are becoming desperate. Children, especially if they are idle and out of school, may be looked upon to help to support the family in any way they can. Some may sell tissues or water along the roads, or work in shops doing menial and sometimes dangerous labor. Wages for children are lower than for adults making it easier for them to find work during these trying times.

The Tahaddi team realized the need to act quickly to address the multitude of challenges families face. Failing to do so would likely mean children would not return to school even after the pandemic ends. The team developed a multipronged approach:



Food insecurity:

Food vouchers are being given to the families. When students are onsite, Tahaddi is also providing them with a nutritious sandwich as a snack



Lack of internet and electricity:

Cash assistance is being offered to help pay internet fees



Lack of proper devices:

Phones were provided for families who did not own one and tablets will be distributed soon thanks to many generous donations



Out of school children:
The hybrid model allows Tahaddi to accommodate 50 additional students



Family Stress:

Parents were not forgotten in these difficult times and are receiving online or onsite mental health or positive parenting sessions to help them cope with this stressful and confusing situation



Digital Divide:

Remote and hybrid learning through WhatsApp, which is a common software used by families

The Tahaddi team is happy to share that this year, despite these hardships, a total of 359 students have been registered in our education programs (263 children completed last school year): 228 students in the primary education stream, 67 students in the Early Childhood Education Program, and 64 in the I Learn @ Home Program. This includes 6 students in the special education class. The incredible team of educators and therapists were online with the students for up to 6 hours per day, delivering a comprehensive program including music, theatre, art, protection and COVID awareness sessions.

The I Learn @ Home Program has also expanded! This initiative, which began last year, trains mothers from the community to teach in their home basic numeracy and literacy to children aged 10 and above. These are children who were not able to register in school or an education center. An additional tutor was added this year, bringing the total to 4 mothers teaching 64 children in 8 groups (last year's program included 27 children divided into 3 groups).



“

Our educators helped us during these times to continue learning in a fun way. It would have been so boring at home all these months

“

“

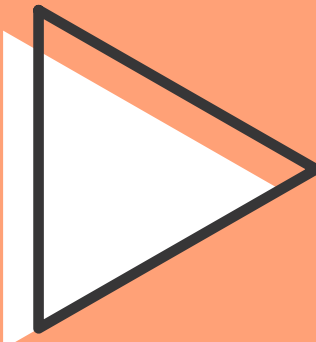
Without the help we are receiving, we probably would have had to send our children to work

“



In addition, 53 children who were former students in our education center and are registered in Public School, enrolled in our Homework Support Program. This is much less than last year but almost all our educators are busy with the hybrid program and homework support has also gone online during the pandemic.

Public schools in Lebanon resumed mid-November; however, shortly after, schooling was again interrupted by a new lockdown.



Art is an integral part in the Tahaddi Education Center.
Watch this video to learn more!

Thanks to several donations, Tahaddi's former students, who completed carpentry training, made 300 floor tables for children to be comfortable when studying at home!



Tala: A Journey of Pain, Courage and Renewed Hope



I cannot even begin to put in words the nightmare I have been through, nor the losses I have endured. All of which have led me to where I am now.

I am a Lebanese woman. Up until 2012, I was living in Syria with my Syrian husband and two children. The war began and my husband was abducted. After many months of not knowing his whereabouts, I returned to Lebanon to be with my parents. Three years later, out of the blue, I received a phone call from my husband telling me he was alive and asking me to return to Syria. I did, and that is when the nightmare really began.

We had two more children and were living in Idlib until the city was targeted by bombings and my husband was killed. Four months after my husband's passing, his family called me from Egypt asking me to bring my children and join them there. Lost and in fear, I decided to flee from Idlib to Turkey and then from Turkey make my way to Egypt. I left with my four children, one of whom was only 47 days old. We stayed at the Syrian-Turkish border for two months, trying to make the treacherous crossing into Turkey. One day, as we were trying to make yet another attempt at crossing, we were attacked by the army. My eldest daughter, 14, was hit by a bullet and she died in my arms.

I went back to Idlib and buried my daughter next to my husband. Shortly after, my late husband's brother abducted my children and threatened to take them away from me forever unless I marry him, and so I did, and got pregnant. One day, as the war raged on, my "new" husband suddenly disappeared for a few days, and this is when I took the opportunity to run away to Lebanon. The journey to Lebanon was long and horrifying, as I was pregnant and alone with my three children, but we finally arrived after almost a month on the road.

It was November 2019 and I settled in Sabra near the Tahaddi centers. The house I rented had no electricity, no water and no access to sunlight whatsoever. However, thanks to the cash assistance I received from Tahaddi, I managed to fix the house a bit. I received food vouchers, gas for cooking, monthly cash assistance, and diapers and milk when my baby was born. My 15-year-old and four-year-old sons are now students at the TEC. I also recently started working in Tahaddi's Sewing Atelier making masks. All of us women at the atelier work hard and sometimes we feel tired, but we are so grateful for this opportunity. I would not have been able to survive and raise my children if I was not working.

Sometimes I worry about my eldest son because he is more aware of all that happened to us. He mourned the loss of his father and sister in the same year. Fortunately, he could see the Tahaddi Education Center's psychologist and he is better now. I don't talk to him about what happened, I always tell him he has a new life ahead of him. I pray that God continues to give me the strength to fight for and protect my children. I hope their future will be brighter.

“

I don't talk to my son about what happened, I always tell him he has a new life ahead of him, and that he should always look forward,

“

