



Canadian Palestinian Educational Exchange

Letter from the Board

A warm welcome to our latest edition of the Arch from the CEPAL Board of Directors! While our plans for 2012 are now well under way, we wanted to take this opportunity share some successes from 2011.

Our main highlight, as always, was our overseas program. This year, CEPAL sent two volunteers for a three-month fall program in Beirut. This was our first fall program, and our volunteers had the opportunity to work with longstanding partners as well as two new organizations. They provided over 35 hours of teaching a week across seven different programs in two camps. As per usual with CEPAL, we struggled to bring our volunteers home: Henry stayed an additional three weeks, and Jaclyn returns in late February!

We were particularly delighted by the success of our program given

the challenges in running it. On our partners' advice, we ran a fall program because Ramadan currently takes place during the summer, making programming difficult. Also on their advice, and due to security concerns in the Bekaa Valley, we returned to Beirut rather than to Wavel camp. While we hope to return to Wavel in the future, we were delighted to work again with partners in Bourj el Barajneh and Shatila camps, and to continue our programming despite the current tensions in the region.

Last, CEPAL relies entirely on our generous donors for our programming. We warmly thank our 2011 donors for helping make our program a reality. We invite everyone to donate in 2012. With your support, we can do more.

Warmly,

The CEPAL Board of Directors



Changes



In Canada, we made some small but important changes. You may have noticed, for example, that we changed our logo. We wanted it to capture a couple of ideas we think are fundamental to the organization: (1) that education is a basic human right and building block to a better life; and (2) that CEPAL is about a two-way exchange between Canadians and Palestinians. We are also making slow changes to our website: please visit us [here](#). If you're interested in helping, we're also looking for a webmaster. Please email us at info@cepal.ca

Finally, in 2011 we experienced a turnover on our Board of Directors. After more than two years of incredible commitment to CEPAL, former President and Director Natalie Zeitoun and Liz Cooper stepped down from the Board. CEPAL is incredibly grateful to them for their tireless efforts, without which programming would not have been possible. Former CEPAL volunteer Alex Conliffe took over as President, while Rami Darwich and Zeina Sleiman joined the Board. You can read about the Board members [here](#).

IN THE MEDIA

With funding from the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO), **UNRWA** has released a 24-minute video documentary on the Palestinian refugee experience in Lebanon by filmmaker Philippe Bajjaly. The film follows the experiences of Omar, a young man living in Burj al-Barajneh camp, through his interactions with his Lebanese and Palestinian friends. You can find the full documentary [here](#).

2011 Volunteer Program

This year, CEPAL helped deliver seven programs in Bourj el-Barajneh and Shatila camps in Beirut. We worked with traditional partners, Beit Atfal Assamoud and Najdeh, to deliver after-school English language classes and peer tutoring to children in grades 4-7, and evening classes for women.

We also started to work with two new organizations. With [Unite Lebanon Youth Project](#) (ULYP), we helped deliver SAT preparation sessions for graduating Palestinian students. With [Inma Foundation](#), we helped run morning games and activities classes for kindergarten programs.

Our volunteers sought to deliver more than day-to-day programming. With Inma, our volunteers helped build a repertoire of new sports activities for the kindergartens. When Henry's Najdeh program for women became too popular for a single session, he split the women in two groups, with more advanced women helping beginners learn the language. Small efforts such as these ensure benefits from our program continue even after our volunteers leave.

**Two ways to
Donate CEPAL**

1. SEND US A CHEQUE

You can send a cheque made out to "Canadian Palestinian Educational Exchange"

to:

CEPAL, 612 Markham Street,
Toronto, Ontario
M6G 2L8

2. DONATE ONLINE THROUGH "CANADAHELPS.ORG"

[Click Here](#)

or visit our main site

<http://www.cepal.ca/>

Our 2011 Volunteers



Jaclyn Ting (Team Leader): An Asian-Canadian from Montreal, Jaclyn was strongly influenced by her upbringing among other first-generation Canadians with parents from all corners of the globe who often spoke of struggles in their homelands. Her upbringing inspired her to complete a Bachelor's degree in Political Science at McGill University, with minors in Middle East and Women's Studies. After advocating for Palestinian rights on campus, Jaclyn realized that she needed to participate in something more concrete and fruitful. Believing in the potential for education to act as a revolutionary force, both to better the situation of refugees and to find an equitable resolution to conflict, Jaclyn joined CEPAL's 2011 program.

Henry Zaccak: Henry joined CEPAL's 2011 program partway through his studying for his Master of Health Informatics at the University of Waterloo. He has a Hon. B.Sc. in Computer Science from the University of Toronto and is Project Management Professional-certified from the Project Management Institute. Henry has worked for various technology startup companies, focusing on Finance, Insurance and Healthcare, and recently worked for a non-profit healthcare organization. Forward thinking, solutions-driven, and highly-motivated, Henry joined CEPAL with big dreams for Palestinian refugees and a Palestinian state, as well as the positive role CEPAL can play in Lebanon.





After CEPAL's program finished, Henry made a quick return to the camps as "Baba Noel." In this new capacity, he helped Inma visit hundreds of children in six kindergartens in Bourj el-Barajneh. He says: "It was a ton of fun and Baba Noel was able to make a quick stop in Shatila to ensure "Najdeh" got to meet Baba Noel before he was on his way back to Canada."

Photo courtesy of Henry Zaccak

Kindergarten games and activities classes with Inma.

Photo courtesy of Jaclyn Ting



Teaching English in Bourj and Shatila, I have come to see how stressed and exhausted children and families are. CEPAL's main purpose, therefore, is to provide activities to alleviate this tension. The key to survival is a sense of humour. It is through laughter that we, as foreigners, attempt to be part of their world. In this way, we are able to connect with them, and them with us.

Photo courtesy of Jaclyn Ting