

## **Developing a Needlework Training Program and a Business Start Up to Help Syrian Female Refugee Workers in Lebanon.**

**Aramoun, Lebanon.**

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### **Background:**

Since the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War in 2011, over 1.5 million Syrian refugees, including myself, have fled their homes and sought refuge in Lebanon. Due to Lebanon's weak economy, the government set several restrictions on the male Syrian refugees seeking employment in the labor market, such as prohibitive work permit requirements and employer's preference not to hire Syrians. This led many Syrian female workers, particularly young girls, to become the breadwinners of their families by working informal jobs. In 2016, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) indicated that young Syrian female workers are at high risk of sexual harassment and assault in Lebanon and Jordan. Later on, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), many Syrian refugee girls experienced sexual exploitation and were forced into prostitution. Furthermore, this situation has led to a large number of female Syrian workers not being able to attend school as highlighted in UNICEF reports that Syrian girls are more likely to face barriers to education than boys, particularly when it comes to poverty and child labor. This illustrates the struggle faced by Syrian females in Lebanon, who hoped to find peace and safety in the host country but instead encountered fear worse than the violence that forced them to leave their homes.

### **Project Summary:**

Through this project, I aim to establish a safe work environment for Syrian female workers. This will be accomplished by providing a vocational training program in knitting and crocheting to launch a business startup that will serve as a sustainable source of income for the participants. The project offers an alternative option to unsafe and exploitative informal job environments in Lebanon. In addition to that, craftsmanship jobs require less physical effort and time than other jobs Syrian female workers may be doing. This will open up opportunities for young females to manage between working, caring for their families, and going back to school. Besides, this project may help them afford their school expenses. Additionally, one of the key reasons for choosing this project is that I am unable to involve myself or any other NGO in academic or school-related projects for Syrians, as this role is restricted to the UN and mentors from the Lebanese Ministry of Education. Due to the restrictions mentioned, I found that vocational training can be just as effective and beneficial as academic education in terms of gaining skills. For example, according to a study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), vocational education and training programs can improve employability, increase earning potential, and reduce the inequality gap by providing disadvantaged groups, such as Syrian female refugees who may not have had access to a proper education, with a greater chance of finding good employment in the labor market.

### **Implementation:**

I have collaborated with the non-profit organization, Volunteers Without Borders, to compile a list of 50 Syrian female refugees between the ages of 15-25 who reside in Aramoun Village, Aley, Lebanon, as the targeted group for this project. They will be divided into three separate groups in three different classrooms at Al Nashea Al Salim private school. Each group will be led by a professional and skilled trainer who is also either a Syrian refugee or a lower-working class Lebanese female. The training program begins on May 17th and finishes on August 2nd. It focuses on teaching both crocheting and knitting skills, with the goal of producing products that will be marketed at the end of the project. The target customers for these products are babies under 2 years old. This consumer group was chosen as it requires less wool yarn and results in more cloth pieces. Additionally, despite the economic crisis in Lebanon, Lebanese people prioritize purchasing clothes and accessories for their newborn babies, so this project aims to offer affordable options to Lebanese people and income to Syrian refugees, benefiting both groups. At the very end of the project, a digital marketing campaign is held so the participants can

learn more about the good use of social media and how they can market their products later on. Furthermore, the project will continue even after the program ends by selling the marketed items and distributing 70% or more of the revenue to the participant and using 30% or less to purchase new materials. Fortunately, wool yarns are inexpensive in Lebanon, allowing for most of the revenue to go directly to the producers. Lastly, the project will continue to be managed and funded if needed by Volunteers Without Borders. This project can leave long lasting impact on the participants financial life and also they can share the learned skills with their surrounding community.

<b>Weeks</b>	<b>Activities</b>
March 11-31, 2023	Define the workshop goals and create a plan.
April 1-30, 2023	Form a partnership with the non-profit organization, Volunteers Without Borders, by engaging with two of their representatives based in Aramoun, Lebanon. Also, establish an agreement with Al Neshae Al Salim private school in Aramoun, Lebanon to host all future workshop days and ceremonies/events.
May 1-17, 2023	Design the workshop content and thoughtfully select best suited trainers to lead the sessions, assuring the highest level of training and product management. Each trainer is assigned to a group of 15-17 participants and has their own designated training classroom.
May 17-31, 2023	<u><i>Needlework Basics Introduction:</i></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 days a week, 3 hours per day.</li> </ul> Introduce basics of both knitting and crocheting to all participants. Trainers may choose their preferred starting needlework type between the above mentioned two. At the end of this two week period, participants may decide which type of needlework they would like to continue working with.
June 1-7, 2023	<u><i>Socks and Gloves Production:</i></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 days a week, 3 hours per day.</li> </ul> Teach the method of making socks and gloves for babies on the first day, followed by the actual production process. Additionally, begin distributing needlework patterns books.
June 7-21, 2023	<u><i>Headwears and Scarfs Production:</i></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 days a week, 3 hours per day.</li> </ul> Teach the techniques of baby headwears and scarfs knitting/crocheting. Besides, emphasize other ways of finding needlework patterns on the internet, and introduce steps for sketching and designing one's own patterns.
June 21- July 5, 2023	<u><i>Shoes Production:</i></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 days a week, 3 hours per day.</li> </ul> Teach the method of making shoes for babies on the first 3 days, followed by the actual production process.
July 5-19, 2023	<u><i>Jackets, Sweaters, and Pants Production:</i></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 days a week, 4 hours per day.</li> </ul> Teach the method of making jackets, sweaters, and pants for babies on the first 4 days, followed by the actual production process.
July 19-26, 2023	<u><i>Accessories and Additional Items Production:</i></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 days a week, 3 hours per day.</li> </ul> Allow for a free-week during which participants can choose which other baby items or accessories they are interested in creating.

July 26- Aug 2, 2023	<p><u>Digital Marketing Workshop:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 days a week, 2 hours per day.</li> </ul> <p>Collaborate with the professional social media management company, ILAVISION, to hold an informational session on how they will market the participants' products through various social media platforms, and provide guidance on how they can start their own online business if they desire to do so.</p>
Aug 2-5, 2023	<p><u>Exhibition/Craft Fair:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 days, 4 hours per day.</li> </ul> <p>Host an exhibition/fair at Al Nashea AL Salim School, where the municipality will announce an open invitation to all Aramoun residents. All participants, trainers, and representatives from collaborating institutions should be present.</p>
Aug 6, 2023	<p><u>Ceremony:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 day, 3 hours per day.</li> </ul> <p>Organize a ceremony to honor the completion of the workshop, where certificates of achievement will be awarded to all participants and trainers.</p>

#### **A Brief Summary of the Budget Sheet:**

The following information is provided to develop a better understanding of the project expenses in the budget sheet: (The inconsistency and lack of logic in prices is a result of the ongoing inflation in Lebanon.)

- The Non-Student Travel and Lodging section includes: \$600 transportation for only 10 participants who reside on the outskirts of Aramoun Village, \$450 for three-month rental of three classrooms, and finally \$100 event hall rent for the fair and ceremony days.
- The Direct Equipment and Supplies section includes: \$700 in the first week for all the needlework pattern books, crochet/knitting accessories (i.e. trims and buttons), crochet hooks, knitting pins, and around 50 wool yarns. The budget for the other weeks demonstrates the specific quantities of wool yarn needed for each section of the workshop, as outlined in the itinerary above. In total, the requested budget will allow for the purchase of 2500 wool yarns
- The Marketing and Event Support section includes: \$50 refreshment on the first day of the workshop, \$250 for each week when the hours per day exceed 3 hours, \$150 for the fair day, and \$200 for the ceremony. Finally, the \$1000 is allocated towards social media marketing packages from ILAVISION: 2 premium bundles of \$400 which consists of photography as well as monthly posts, content creation, hashtags, ads, and other features. Besides, 4 basic bundles of \$50. This covers a total of 6 months marketing.
- The Staffing Costs and Miscellaneous sections: \$3000 three-months stipend for the three facilitators of the workshop, a \$100 stipend for the mentor of the Digital Marketing workshop week, and lastly, \$500 in the Miscellaneous section to be used for purchasing additional materials for participants who wish to continue with the business.

#### **Spreading Peace:**

This project aims to express my empathy towards the disadvantaged group of Syrian female refugee workers. During my time in Lebanon, I have witnessed them being humiliated in various ways and I have felt powerless to support them. However, through this project, I hope to demonstrate to them that there are individuals who care about them and are willing to help. Additionally, I aim to show them that they deserve to live a life free from fear and humiliation. Unfortunately, financial stability is a key factor in attaining mind peace in this brutal world. Therefore, this project aims to provide them with financial assistance, even if it is only a small amount, and to also help them discover and develop their abilities in various fields, as most of them never get the opportunity to do so. Finally, this project aims to bring peace and respect to Syrian female refugee workers in the Lebanese labor market.