PERSONAL JOURNEYS

As part of the Participatory Action Research, young people reflected on the journey they embarked upon in becoming Young Researchers and Advocates. Their stories reflect the personal impact of the experience. They shed light on the knowledge and skills they learned; the discovery of similarities and differences between their own aspirations and social realities, and those of their peers; the positive changes in the perception of their own value; and a sense of increased status among peers, family and community.

“We have come so far and we don’t want to stop here. We want more.”

Ahmed Gherbal
Homs, Syria

Mahmoud Al Rifaai
Syrian refugee living in Zaatari Refugee Camp, Jordan

Nour Saleh
Homs, Syria

Sally Mohammed
Amman, Jordan

Rozana Tarabay
Mount Lebanon, Lebanon

Bilal Hariri
Syrian refugee living in Jordan

Mai Eyad
Palestinian refugee from Gaza, living in Marka, Jordan

Sania Al Jundi
Homs, Syria

Hatem
Homs, Syria

Mohammad Dia
Beirut, Lebanon

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Sally Mohammed
Amman, Jordan

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“I left school 5 years ago because of my circumstances and some problems I faced. I had to give up my friends and dreams so I was desperate and frustrated.

Joining the Participatory Action Research gave me great motivation to be part of the change and give voice to young people in my community.

The research gave me the moral motivation to contribute in finding positive solutions and allow young people to be pioneers of a future free of problems and where the voices of youth are heard.”

Sally Mohammed
Amman, Jordan

“I am a Lebanese university student. During my university studies in public health, I had the opportunity to be part of the Participatory Action Research. I learned about what this research is and how research tools can be applied. The research allowed me to find out more about many of the problems faced by our youth.

The research gave me the moral motivation to contribute in finding positive solutions and allow young people to be pioneers of a future free of problems and where the voices of youth are heard.”

Rozana Tarabay
Mount Lebanon, Lebanon

“I left school 5 years ago because of my circumstances and some problems I faced. I had to give up my friends and dreams so I was desperate and frustrated.

Joining the Participatory Action Research gave me great motivation to be part of the change and give voice to young people in my community.

The research gave me a lot of experience and confidence in myself. I also feel I gained a lot of communication and leadership skills.

I wish to become part of the change through this research and solve many of the problems in our society so that we can be a society free of problems and suffering”
“I joined the Participatory Action Research with UNICEF because I wanted to do research on the situation of girls in our society, especially in light of the crisis. There are girls that cannot go to school or that are forced to marry young. Many girls are forced to change their lives. Although it was sometimes difficult to get some of the girls involved – many were prevented by the parents - they opened up to me and we discussed many of their problems. They felt comfortable with me because we have similar ages. The participatory action research tools helped me get to know more about their problems and find out what they wish for the future.”

Nour Saleh
Homs, Syria

“The picture tells more. I wanted to get rid of the pictures that I had on my mind. I wanted to talk about the chains put on us - especially as a female.”

Pictures drawn by Nour and her friend trying to express the feelings they were exposed to during the research.
I live in Beirut and my dream is to become a fashion designer.
Through the Participatory Action Research, I have been able to learn a lot of new skills, such as research, communication and advocacy. Although the workshops and the research have been very hard work, I have also spent the most beautiful days with the best people, trainers and mentors. They have given me motivation and strength.”

Sania Al Jundi
Homs, Syria

“I am fourth-year student at university, where I study English. I am a volunteer with Mabadaroon and Aoun.
I had the opportunity to join the Participatory Action Research and through my research, I collected and analysed data that helped me identify the challenges of my community.”

Mohammad Dia
Beirut, Lebanon
Evidence Generation: Participatory Action Research with Young People in the MENA Region
Regional Workshop, April 2017
Partner Organizations
JOHUD, Norwegian Refugee Council, Masar Association, Aoun, UNFPA, ILO, UNESCO, UNRWA, UNDP

"The Social Support Centre I attend in Marka gave me the golden chance to join the Participatory Action Research Project, and this has been one of the most beautiful experiences.

While doing my research with other peers in my community, I discovered that I was able to take responsibility.

My family is very proud of me and I am also very proud of myself.

My wish is to see real solutions to the many problems that I identified through my research and that young people face in my community."

Ahmed Gherbal
Homs, Syria

"I am studying a Bachelor in Business Administration and I have been volunteering since 2012.

My interest in community participation sparked my desire to join the Participatory Action Research.

Doing the interviews was the most interesting for me because it enabled me to dig deeper into the issues and gain confidence of the interviewees.

One of the most important changes I noticed in myself is that I gained a huge interest in the problems of young university students and graduates, and in the search of ideas and initiatives that can serve their needs."

Mai Eyad
Palestinian refugee from Gaza, living in Marka, Jordan
Through the Participatory Action Research I conducted in the camp, I found that many young people want to travel away from war and live in peace. They want to travel to complete their education and have a better future.

No matter how many obstacles and challenges young people in Zaatari remain hopeful of their life and future. They work hard every day to develop themselves and achieve their dreams.

“My family and I left Syria and arrived to Jordan when I was nine years old. I am now 15 and dropped out of school three years ago.

After joining the Participatory Action Research Project, my family looked at me differently. They respected and trusted me more. I feel I have learnt a lot of new abilities that I did not know before, like getting a group of young people to express their ideas and problems.

My hope is that the voices of young people reach the decision makers in society because it is important to solve the problems they face in their communities.”

Bilal Hariri
Syrian refugee living in Jordan

Mahmoud Al Rifaa
Syrian refugee living in Zaatari Refugee Camp, Jordan

During the training on Participatory Action Research with UNICEF, I learned about research tools such as interviews and tree analysis. I chose to do research with university students who were cut off from education and then returned to it. During the research, my peers showed great ambitions and hopes for the future. I benefited from the solutions they proposed because we all share a similar situation. I also discovered that I was able to better understand the issues that we face and come up with ways to solve them.

Hatam
Homs, Syria