



Making our neighborhood green!

A recent environment improvement effort brought together the community surrounding Tahaddi to solve a serious dilemma: the build-up of trash!

Towards the end of winter, garbage had begun piling up just 20 meters from the Tahaddi Education Center. Garbage collection in Tahaddi's neighborhood is only done in a few locations and this place was not one of them! With the growing mounds of trash came insects, rodents, pollution and an overpowering smell.

Something needed to be done, especial-

ly as the children had begun playing next to the garbage.

Tahaddi's social workers took action and invited the neighbors to come together to find a solution. We expected roughly 10 people to attend the meeting but, to our surprise, over 40 showed up!

After a lively discussion, the group decided to remove the trash themselves and plant trees in the area instead.

The very next morning, clad in gloves and masks, the community gathered to complete the considerable task of removing the trash. With the TEC social work team working side by side with the

women of the community and after two hours of heavy lifting, we were able to fill the bed of a sizable pickup truck to the brim.

The truck, which was lent by a neighbor, then took the trash to the regular garbage collection site.

The following afternoon, the group returned with shovels and picks to plant trees, which were paid for by local donors after a quick campaign over WhatsApp.

Today, over a month later, the trees are still standing and the trash has not returned. The community has taken good care of the plants!

Fun, Healthy Outings in Nature!

Being around nature, and taking a break from the harsh conditions of the neighborhood, provides an important and much needed reprieve for families.

This spring, we took advantage of Tahaddi's proximity to Sanayeh Gardens, one of the nicest public parks in Lebanon, and brought a number of groups to play and enjoy the greenery.

Public parks are rare in Lebanon so we are grateful to be located close to this park, which feels like it is worlds away from the overcrowded, concrete-filled alleys surrounding Tahaddi.

The health center team took a group of women and their children on an outing for Mother's Day, the education center staff took the pre-school children in early May, and Tahaddi's psychologist took a group of women and children involved in a psychosocial support program.

Families often tend to be a bit reticent to travel to new or unknown areas and so rarely leave the neighborhood. Tahaddi staff encouraged them to continue to visit the park on their own and provided practical information on which buses to use, opening hours etc.



The families loved being able to sit under trees and watch their children play gleefully in a safe place. For most of them, it was the first outing in months.



Looking for more frequent updates on Tahaddi, our centers, and our work? Make sure to check out our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/tahaddilebanon/



Tahaddi Health Center from the perspective of its visiting residents!

As part of their training, senior residents from the Department of Family Medicine at the American University of Beirut spend one year at Tahaddi Health Center (THC). This partnership has been an important development for us at Tahaddi which has increased the breadth and quality of our work. We recently sat down with Dr. Rim Taleb and Dr. Reina Alameddine to ask them a few questions about their experiences as medical residents at Tahaddi Health Center.

Could you share with us about how your experience at Tahaddi impacted you as a doctor/person?

Dr. Rim: "Tahaddi has helped me understand the value of being a family physician. It was at Tahaddi that I felt the importance of treating patients, rather than diseases.

Serving underprivileged populations awakened in me a sense of humanism and encouraged me to be more socially conscious. Tahaddi's model represents the perfect biopsychosocial approach within a community."

Dr. Reina: "There is a lot to share about Tahaddi! Experiencing the extremely harsh living conditions of Ta-

haddi's patients was not easy. We struggled with the stark contrast we witnessed between the economic means of patients at Tahaddi versus those we see in other settings.

Exposure to the lives and medical needs of the communities with whom Tahaddi works pushed us to reflect on what our health system needs and how we as medical practitioners can work to improve it.

From a public health perspective it is very important for young doctors to be trained at clinics like Tahaddi's to gain better insight into social determinants of health.

I really learned a lot from Tahaddi's multi-disciplinary approach and team.

Is there a particular patient case or family that especially stands out?

Dr. Reina: "There are so many hard cases, especially among refugees who have fled their country under horrible circumstances. I was especially touched by a recent case I had.

While coming into the clinic I saw a teenage boy smoking outside. I made what I thought was a lighthearted joke to him about the dangers of smoking.

Later that morning he came into my examination room complaining of pain in his arm. When I examined his arm, I was shocked to learn that his right hand had been cut off as a punishment

by ISIS! I felt as if I had been struck by lightning. I was horrified at the extreme cruelty, this teenager was right handed and they had cut off his right hand. I was face to face with the horrors and the atrocities of the crisis that has been raging around us.

To me every one of Tahaddi's patients is a hero in some way. Despite all the challenges they manage to carve out a life for themselves and their families and come into the clinic with a smile on their faces."

Are there aspects of this experience at Tahaddi that you will take with you into your later medical practice?

Dr. Reina: "Absolutely. Firstly I have realized through my time at Tahaddi that we have a very serious problem within our society in terms of providing care to a significant population—not just for Syrian refugees but for Lebanese citizens and those from the Dom ethnic minority also struggle to access health care.

Secondly my time at Tahaddi was a confirmation of my strong belief in primary care. Family medicine in essence is interested in the patient as a person, their well being as a whole becomes the center of our attention. In the clinical setting, I am able to chat with my patients and truly enjoy getting to know them."

Tabaddi Health Center in pictures...



And in numbers....

How many people benefit from THC each month?

- 400 medical patients seen
- 400 visits with the social worker
- 20 medical home visits
- 2,567 active patients registered

Quick Update on Mohammad!

For those of you who have followed the story of Mohammad, we have an exciting update! Mohammed is the boy who underwent surgeries on both legs in 2012 and has now had several years of physical therapy at the Hatem Foundation, a partner organization. As a result, Mohammed, who was previously at risk of losing his mobility, is now able to walk with the support of a walker.

Mohammad recently turned 17! Tahaddi referred him to al-Kafaat, a local organization that runs a variety of vocational training programs for young people. He now attends their program daily and is learning to make mosaics, a practical art that can become a trade. It may even allow him to support his family one day!



Our sewing atelier now has a new home!

Our new income generating sewing workshop now has a dedicated space after we completed renovations on an apartment in the neighborhood!

The women in the program are enjoying the two remodeled and well lit rooms. Prior to this, the women had to pack and unpack their sewing machines and other equipment each morning as they

were sharing a space within the Tahaddi Education Center.

We are thankful that new orders continue to come in, and that 25 women of different technical levels are now able to work daily from 8:00-2:00. One of the more advanced seamstresses from the community has been appointed as the coordinator of the center.

As this dynamic and motivated team has gained new skills and earned income, they have shared how this program has allowed them to feel more control over their lives and reduce their sense of dependency.

Renovation on the adjacent apartment which will be used as an activity center for young children is nearly complete. We hope to welcome children this fall!