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# Annual Report 2017

## EDITORIAL

Dear friends and supporters of DROPS,

2017 has been a very special year for DROPS. After an extensive period plagued by security and financial concerns, it was finally possible for both teams in Switzerland and Lebanon to meet and foster an even closer cooperation. It was a very emotional, fruitful and inspiring visit. We had the opportunity to engage with current and potential donors located in Beirut to develop stronger working relations and to strengthen our networks. Furthermore, we established cooperations with several local NGOs, which helped to improve our core program. We also met with external evaluators and engaged in critical and progressive discussions, which resulted in a thorough and insightful assessment conducted later in the year.

The most beautiful experience of all was meeting with our beneficiaries. Hearing their personal stories confirmed our conviction that our comprehensive approach has a positive and lasting impact. We are proud of each and every one of our junior participants, their achievements and their collective contribution to fostering a more peaceful society, especially within the context of local realities. We are delighted to continually witness as participants actively take responsibility for their lives, respond to challenges with increasing confidence and maturity and often take on the role as breadwinners for entire families. Every individual success story motivates us to continue dedicating tireless efforts towards constantly improving the program.

Having started out very positively, 2017 also had challenges in store for us, particularly with respect to the project gap that began in November. Despite encouraging meetings with donors and local NGOs, the temporary setback required us to continue investing dedicated efforts towards more sustainable forms of fundraising. Additionally, we took the opportunity to make necessary program adaptations, which resulted in a positive outcome for 2018. Through this experience, we realized that our dream of building better and more peaceful communities should always remain at the forefront.

Sincerely,

Lora Slovak, Coordination and Financial Officer

## LEBANON IN 2017

The course for a stable and peaceful 2017 was set with the election of a Lebanese president after a 29 month political vacuum and the formation of a new government at the end of 2016. Stability on the political and security fronts allowed the Swiss team to visit Lebanon. The visit helped DROPS further develop its programs and has contributed to a productive and successful year.

However, despite positive developments, Lebanon is and remains a powder keg. Political tensions have increased rapidly over the past years, highlighting some of the major fault lines of the Syrian conflict. Like Syria, Lebanon is also an important piece of the geopolitical puzzle, and therefore, not immune to the adverse effects of proxy wars, such as the existing conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia. In November 2017, the resignation of the Lebanese Prime Minister, Saad Hariri, was announced from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and was considered to be an alleged political manoeuvre against Hizbollah, an Iranian backed Lebanese party. This incident sparked fears of potential hostilities erupting in Lebanon, a small country in the midst of the larger regional players. Fortunately, the political class and the Lebanese population stood united in this moment of crisis. While these fears did not materialize, tensions remained. As the DROPS director stated: “normal peaceful citizens cannot feel safe as long as small weapons proliferate freely around the country”.

Fortunately, a major security breakthrough was achieved in August and September 2017. In a joint operation called “liberation dawn”, the Lebanese and Syrian armies cleared the Lebanese mountains of jihadist fighters. These developments were welcomed in the north of the country, where DROPS operates. Furthermore, we could implement our program without any security related interruptions. This is good news for staff and beneficiaries. With additional pressures attributed to the high influx of refugees in recent years, the demand for sustainable work opportunities and educational programs is very high.

The overall situation is counterbalanced by the adverse effects of poverty and unemployment. Educational institutions have suffered tremendously without access to necessary resources to adequately accommodate increasing numbers of pupils and to adapt their curricula to the specific needs of existing and incoming refugee populations. The culmination of the limitations has resulted in a significantly high dropout rate, which has subsequent consequences on youth employment and quality of life.

At the end of 2017, Lebanon still hosts around 1,000,000 Syrian refugees, which is the largest relative number of refugees from Syria in the region. In particular, North Lebanon, where DROPS operates,

hosts more than 250,000 refugees. Compared to the estimated 4.5 million inhabitants, the refugee population is substantial and poses enormous challenges to the local population, existing state institutions and humanitarian agencies. Refugees from Syria, and a large part of the host population, live under precarious humanitarian conditions.

Consequently, it comes as no surprise that it often takes just one tweet by a government member to exacerbate tensions between host and refugee populations and has the potential to spark discontent among people already living under tremendous daily pressures. In August 2017, the minister of foreign affairs provoked Syrians and Palestinians alike by posting a picture of one of the long standing Palestinian camps and sending out an appeal to Lebanese citizens to never accept the establishment of camps again. In response to this sentiment, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon participated in a peaceful demonstration asking the United Nations and the Lebanese authorities to facilitate their immigration to other countries. Syrian refugees are even less immune to increasingly more persistent political voices asking for their immediate return to safe zones in Syria.

Despite relatively few aforementioned episodes, the underlying tensions remain latent throughout the year. We hope for a peaceful 2018 and will continue to implement our program with these dynamics in mind.

## 2016-17 DROPS JUNIOR PROFESSIONALS: AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE



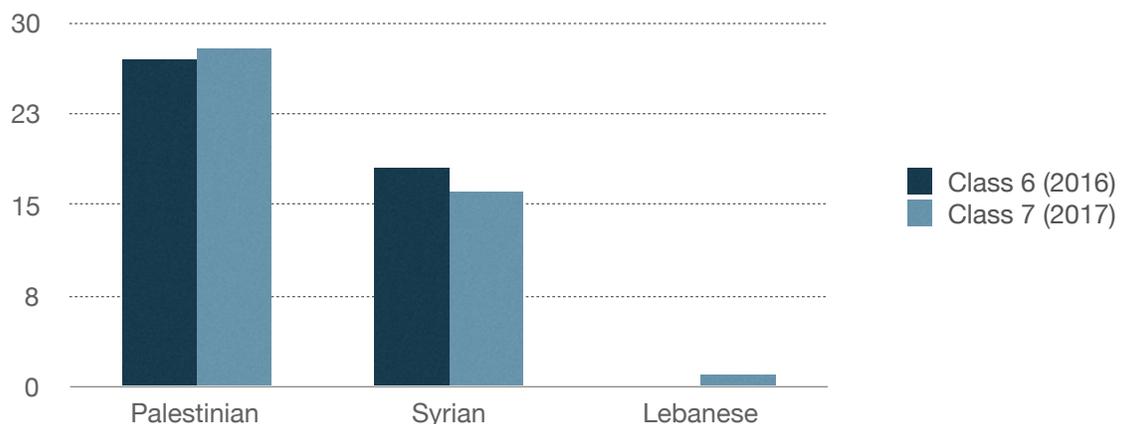
The objective of the DROPS Junior Professional Program for Refugee and Host Communities is to support the social and professional development of marginalized youth in North Lebanon and, in doing

so, to foster peaceful futures in a currently divided society. In 2017, DROPS provided paid on the job training to 90 young men and women from the Beddawi and Nahr al Bared Palestinian refugee camps and the surrounding communities in North Lebanon.

By the end of October 2017, all 90 juniors from two graduating classes (Classes 6 and 7) successfully completed 12-months of on the job training, complemented with psychological support and personal development sessions. Based on the findings of the monitoring efforts introduced in 2017, 70% of the surveyed graduates had secured employment beyond the training period. Many of the remaining 30% are expected to find work and/ or to pursue opportunities for further education with the support of the DROPS follow-up system.

## COMPOSITION OF CLASSES 6 AND 7

The DROPS Junior Professional program offers training and personal development opportunities to participants from all backgrounds and nationalities, with community-bridging at the core of both the program and organizational philosophies. The work locations, as well as the local realities, have shown that while the demand for the program among local Palestinians and Syrian refugees is high, outreach to local Lebanese youth remains a challenge. While Syrian refugees represented the majority of participants between 2014 and 2016, local Palestinians participants increased due to the return of many Syrians to locations they call home during this reporting period.



In terms of gender distribution, a ratio of almost 1:3 female to male participants was maintained in both classes, even when incidences of dropout were accounted for.



Class 7 participants were partially considered based on how dedicated they were to completing the program. Consequently, incidences of premature departure, especially relating to female participants, could be effectively minimized with the consideration of this factor. All female juniors that were accepted into the program, with the exception of one junior, successfully graduated with training in their chosen profession. Additionally, we are optimistic that increased diversity training focusing on associated consequences of early marriage has also played an influential role. Male dropout was also much lower in Class 7 and did not have an effect on gender distribution in either classes.

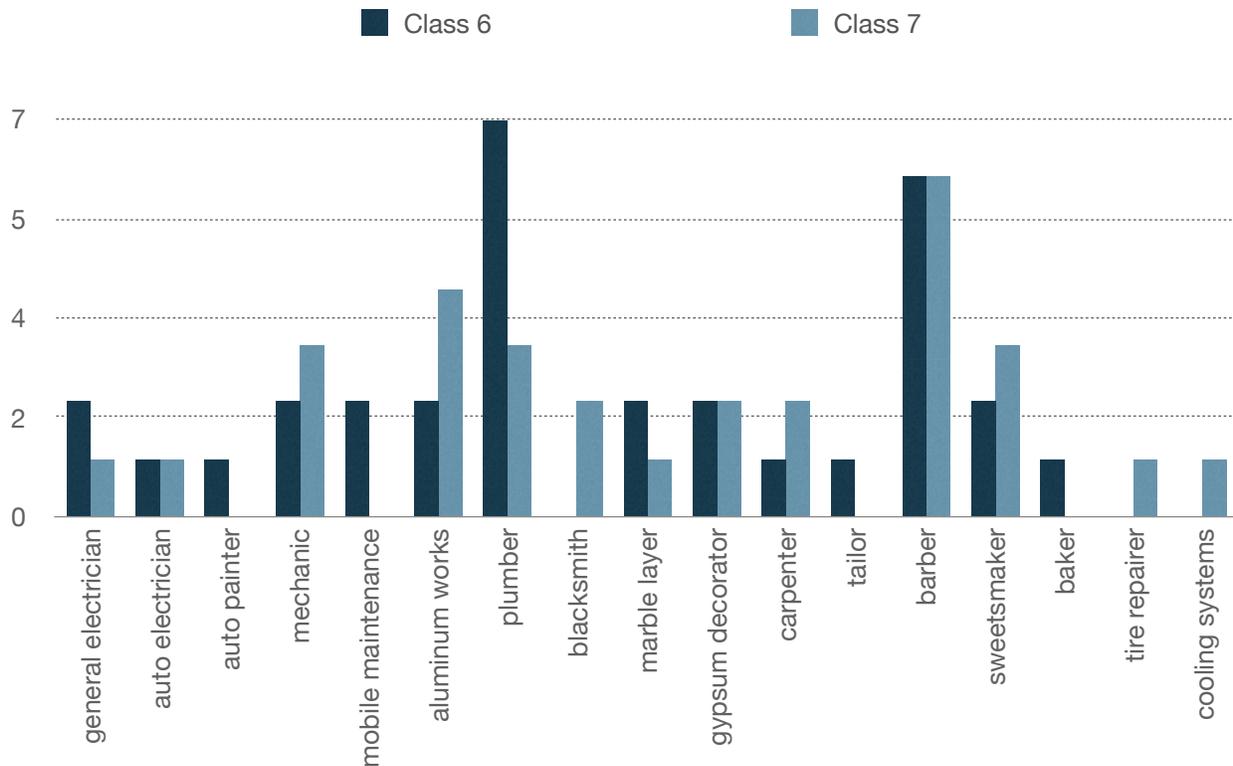
## PROFESSIONAL CHOICES IN CLASSES 6 AND 7

Professional choices made by male juniors were comparable for both classes. It was observed that certain professions were preferred by more participants, such as barbers and plumbers.

In general, the main types of employment opportunities in and around the Palestinian camps involve occupations that are related to food services, automobile maintenance, and construction, as well as work in the services sector. The male employment rate (see the Monitoring section) following graduation from the DROPS program confirmed the high demand for the aforementioned jobs in the local market.

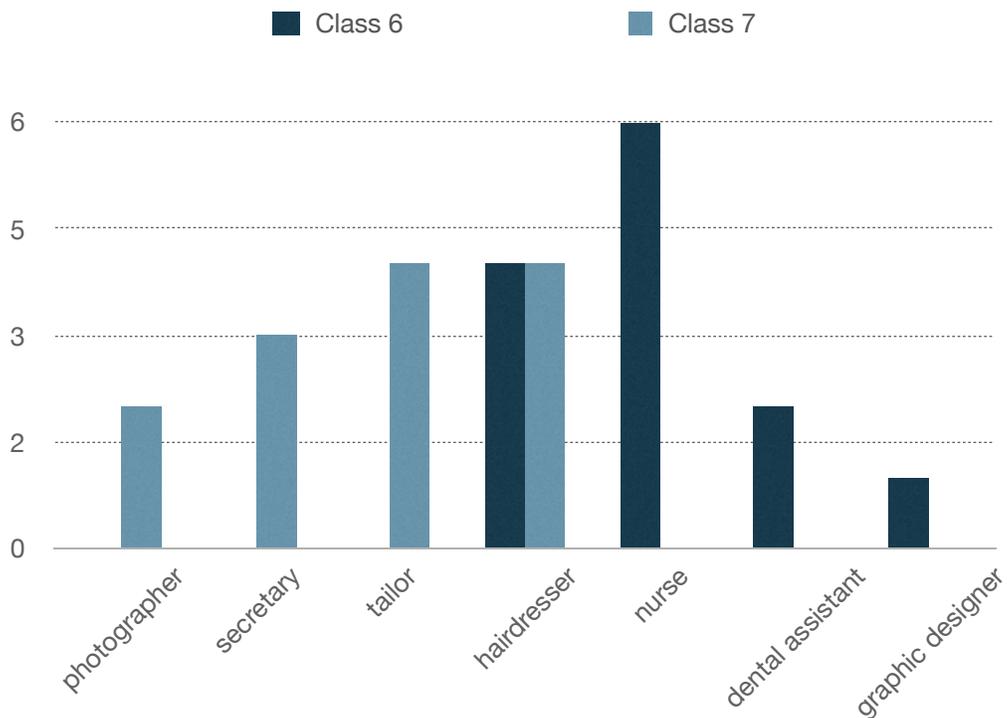
Requests from juniors to change professions are expected and even encouraged in the first month of the training period, although not afterwards. While our staff explain the characteristics of every profession in detail, it is only the on the job experience that can give participants an actual sense of whether they have made the right choice. The first month is usually enough to offer juniors adequate

orientation about the nature of the occupation of interest. Changes to chosen professions only occurs at a later stage in exceptional cases. The figure below provides an overview of the professional choices selected by male participants per class.



Professional choices available to female juniors are relatively limited due to the influence of culturally defined gender roles and perceptions of what is considered to be acceptable professions for women. Consequently, hairdressing, tailoring and photography were observed to be the most common choices. With respect to the latter, continued employment in photography following graduation is limited and challenging. In particular, high expenses associated with requisite technical equipment make start up opportunities highly impractical for graduates in this field. Tailors and hairdressers, on the contrary, have more chances to remain employed, to start a business and/or to work from home.

The following figure highlights the fact that training in medical professions was not offered in Class 7. The decision was based the observation of low employment opportunities post-graduation and the recognition that nursing requires further training.



## PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND ACTIVITIES

The core on the job training program component is complimented with the development of personal life skills, diversity training, community-based mentoring, regular monitoring and psychological support. Furthermore, the juniors have the opportunity to realize a community project at the end of their graduating year with their peers and the DROPS staff. Most of the core program components have evolved organically in response to new opportunities, while taking the needs of junior participants into consideration. In addition, new complimentary activities have been introduced, including literacy training and capacity building opportunities for the local staff.

### DIVERSITY TRAINING

The core diversity training takes places twice a month and addresses personal development topics such as self-awareness, physical and mental health, decision-making, job applications as well as social topics such as early marriage, violent-free communications, peaceful social-coexistence and conflict management. The groups are ethnically mixed to provide opportunities to foster mutual understanding. The groups are usually separated by gender. Additionally gender-mixed customized sessions, as well as

outdoor activities, are organized several times every training year in support of inter-gender dialogue and further understanding among the participants.

In 2017, a successful cooperation with Beit Atfal As Somoud was established. The local organization not only hosted our diversity training session for free, starting from the second half of Class 7, but also provided a male and a female trainer for a series of sessions. The integration of new personalities with different approaches enhanced the experience for our diverse participants. After participating in several diversity training sessions, the juniors' attitudes towards the utility and benefits of these experiences changed. In particular, they expressed that they found group-based activities introduced by the trainer especially enjoyable.

*"It's sometimes funny and makes us smile when one of us does something crazy during the training. We really learn new things that we did not know (before). I never had a hobby and never attended a gym; now I do karate happily and I like it."*

**Wisam Abu Lebdeh , Class 7**

These achievements are as important to us as the merits of professional training. Our aim is to offer youth an alternative perspective, to provide them with the means to acquire skills and the motivation to do something meaningful in their lives and for society.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELLING

The in-house DROPS psychologist evaluated all of the juniors from both classes in the first three months of their training period. Based on the assessment results, individual programs were customized for each participant. The individual treatment was complemented by regular group therapy sessions. According to the findings of an external evaluation conducted in summer 2017, juniors clearly preferred attending the individual sessions. Juniors, who were interviewed, all expressed that they were content with the opportunity to have access to psychological support. In particular, the psychologist could listen to them and offer advice in an objective way, without necessarily basing advice on the adherence to societally accepted norms. According to the psychologist herself, the participants would benefit from the availability of an additional, qualified psychologist to address their needs in a timely manner.

A heartbreaking statement of a junior from Class 7 makes references to the entire program and also highlights how much some of the juniors are in need of the care provided by the psychologist:

*After the murder of my father and the death of mother one year afterwards, I thought that no one would care for me anymore. When I attended the DROPS program, I realized that there was someone who still really cares, and I wish that this will never end, but I know one day it will.*

Sabrine Merhi, Class 7 female junior

## GODPARENTS AND MENTOR MEETINGS

The DROPS mentors or godparents provide further support beyond the psychological counselling sessions and work to address the issues raised during diversity training sessions. All of them are happy with their roles and have expressed that they wish to spend more time with their juniors. In 2017, an initiative from the godparents themselves resulted in additional mentoring sessions with juniors in response to their perceived needs for support and advice. DROPS originally envisaged one session per month and highly welcomes this new development. In an interview with DROPS, one godmother has expressed her joy about feeling helpful and needed again, now that her own children have already grown up. A godfather expressed:

*I am a teacher at a private school, I always thought that my work at school is essential to build a better generation of young people, but it is a paid one. When I started with DROPS, I knew that being a godfather is the best I could do for the young men, it's charitable and is more rewarding than teaching at school.*

Mohammad Khamis, godfather

Juniors cherish the contact with successful and respected members in their community. On one hand, godparents are role models, on the other, trustworthy friends and confidants outside of the juniors' respective family structures.

## COMMUNITY PROJECT

For the first time since the launch of the program in 2011, the community project was realized in the refugee camp of Nahr El Bared. Due to fighting between the Lebanese army and a Jihadist group, the camp continues to be under surveillance of the former. Thanks to the efforts of juniors from Nahr El Bared, DROPS was allowed to implement the proposed project at a local school.

The project consisted of two stages. During the first stage, participants from Classes 6 and 7 built a roof in a school playground to protect children from rain in the winter and the strong sun in the summer. Temperatures have been known to reach over 35 degrees Celsius beginning in the month of May. The construction was urgently needed as UNRWA schools pupils are not allowed to stay inside of the building during the long 35 minute breaks, regardless of the weather conditions outside. Normally, there is a metallic roof that is used as an umbrella in the yard. However, due to the notable number of school children, the space underneath this existent roof is insufficient. The project was proposed by DROPS juniors living in Nahr al Bared and was approved by the rest of the junior participants. Thus, next to the existing ceiling, DROPS built another 20 meter long umbrella. The school headmaster and staff welcomed the idea and gave us the permission to start the construction after receiving the permission from the headquarters in Beirut.

During the second stage, our juniors chose to build a volleyball court. It required two sizeable metallic bars to fix the net. The floor was also painted to ensure that the boundaries were defined based on the dimensions established by international standards.



## PROGRAM MONITORING

Our monitors on staff ensured the smooth implementation of the entire program, including effective communications with all sides involved. They solved a wide range of daily problems, such as dissatisfaction with professions, with work masters, incidences of mobbing, exploitation and many

more. They visited the juniors regularly, at least twice a week, and each monitor visited at least 10 juniors per day. This amounted to an estimated total of 700 visits per month.

## FOLLOW-UP MONITORING

In previous years, DROPS had been convinced of the necessity of a follow-up process to maintain contact with graduates for the following reasons:

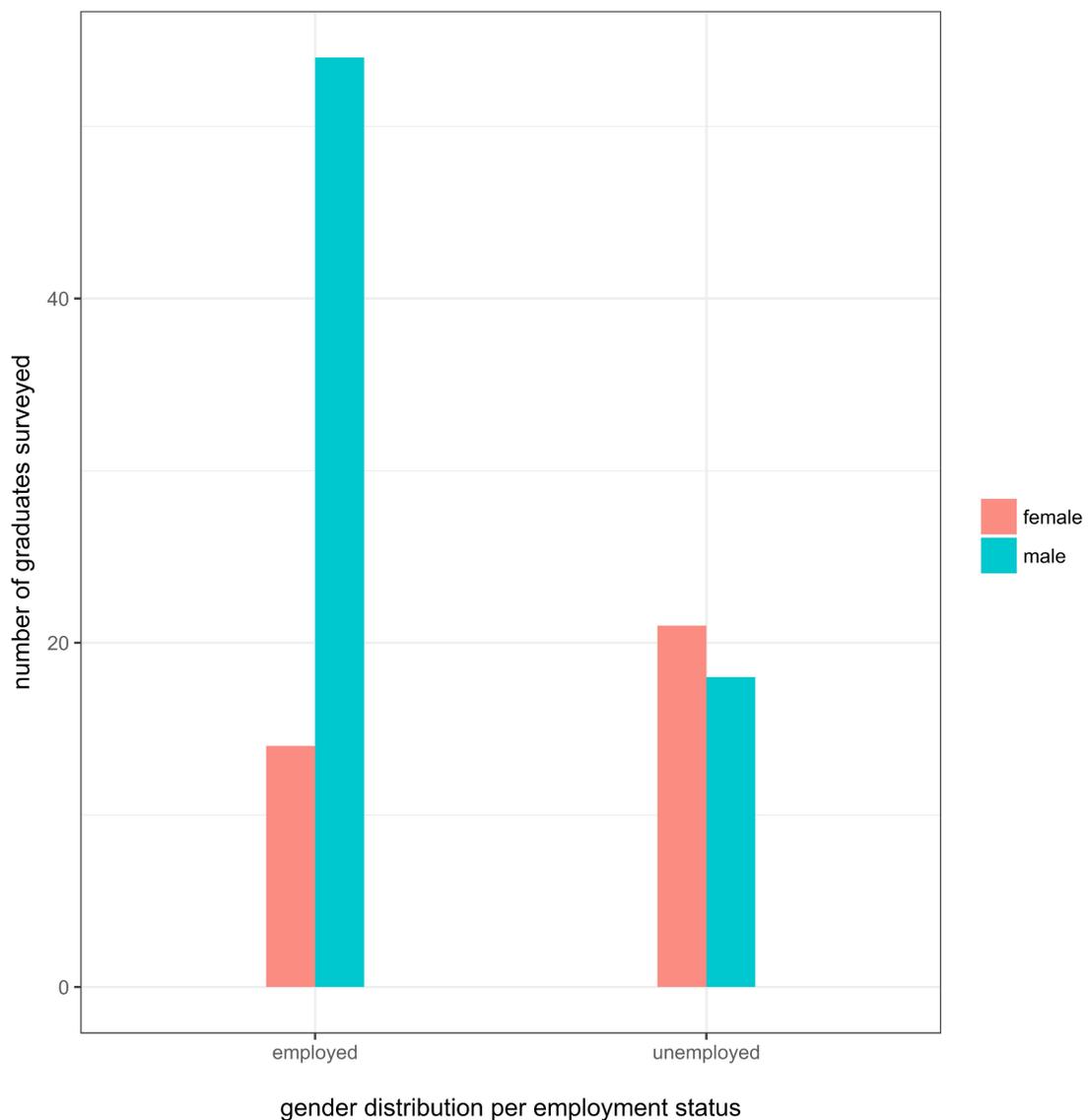
- to provide guidance to juniors when they search for jobs at suitably paid locations;
- to collect data about the juniors' circumstances and individual progress following graduation; and
- to encourage juniors to remain proactive, especially following graduation when contact with peers and DROPS staff is significantly reduced and continue to work towards realizing their goals.

Two new follow-up monitors were specifically hired for these purposes. The objectives of the follow-up idea are to make sure that juniors would continue to work and in positions that they were trained for that were also locally in demand. Through follow-up monitoring, we wanted to ensure that juniors continue to have access to support and resources after graduation and thus our respective efforts lead to more fruitful results in the long-term. Knowing that they are still young and have limited experiences in the job market, we decided to continue supporting them and providing them with continued access to our wide network of local work masters and companies.



### A MONITORING APP FOR FOLLOW-UP AND RECENT EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

The follow-up system was supported with a notable introduction of data collection and analytics into the workflow from the start. A Swiss board member customized a browser-based data collection form designed to support both online and offline data acquisition in the field. Consequently, the form can be used on any mobile device regardless of the operating system. Once an internet connection is available, the data is transferred directly to a database stored on a web server. The figure below describes the employment status of juniors since graduation in 2017 and is an example of one of the data outputs that supports DROPS with monitoring impact of our Junior Professionals Program.



## 2017 EXTERNAL EVALUATION

The 2017 external evaluation highlighted the unique, holistic approach of our program. In particular, the evaluators were impressed with its efficient operation and appreciated the close working relationship among the monitors and the juniors, the gender sensitive approach and the valuable professional training provided to juniors of different ethnic backgrounds. The community projects that were organized once per training year were also highly appreciated. The same study duly noted that youth are effectively deterred from extremism and radicalization with the kind of mentorship and purpose that our program offers.

Some of the key activity recommendations of the evaluation included: activities involving juniors' parents, more community-based liaisons and projects, the extension of an alumni network, training sessions specifically for work masters on how to train and work with youth, training sessions for the social trainer and the godparents, case management and communication skills training sessions for the entire staff, etc. With program adaptations that will be effective in 2018, we incorporated most of the recommendations and are thankful to our professional evaluators for the valuable insights with regards to our program.

## EXTERNAL COLLABORATIONS

In 2017, we extended our network and capabilities to deliver essential services to both juniors and our local staff. Through these changes, we were able to address outstanding program challenges in relation to the social-political context (e.g. knowledge gaps identified for both juniors and staff). Furthermore, we established contact with UNWRA to introduce a referral system for participants who were waitlisted for our program and to inquire about potential job opportunities that would be suitable for our graduates. Successful cooperation with Beit Atfal As Somoud enhanced the quality of our diversity training component. Through this opportunity, we also observed how we can adapt certain elements to further improve the training experience for our juniors (e.g. improvements to infrastructure, potentially more sizeable program venues and the inclusion of more diverse trainers).

## BATTLING ILLITERACY

Functional illiteracy was identified as a notable challenge. With the integration of Syrian participants into the program, the instances of illiteracy increased. There is hardly any profession that does not require at

least a basic level of reading and mathematics. To address this problem, DROPS established a successful cooperation with ANERA Tripoli, which was effective since summer 2017 starting with the Class 7 juniors. 45 juniors were tested in Arabic, English and mathematics. Free courses have been consequently tailored to match their respective levels and made available outside of their work schedules. We are very grateful to ANERA for this opportunity.

## CAPACITY BUILDING FOR LOCAL STAFF

DROPS established contact with Terre des Hommes, an international organization that provided case management training to the staff in Lebanon. Case management involves the collaborative process of evaluating, planning and advocating for a range of options to address the specific needs of our junior beneficiaries. These needs were realized through communications and the identification of suitable resources to promote high quality and cost-effective solutions. In particular, our staff learned about practical tools to be better equipped to handle youth welfare cases. To build upon our successful collaboration, further free training courses with Terre des Hommes have been planned in the upcoming year.

## REFERRAL SYSTEM AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRADUATES

In mid-2017, the general director was contacted by UNWRA's employment centre to explore further training and employment opportunities for juniors who had previously graduated from the DROPS program. Available employment opportunities are sent through daily digests from UNWRA, which are then relayed by the DROPS office to the alumni.

We already maintain strong working relationships with UNWRA and have access to lists of students who have dropped out from school. This information is used to approach and encourage young people to participate in the DROPS program as an alternative to remaining unemployed outside of the formal education system. Potential junior participants who are waitlisted for the DROPS program can also be referred back to the UNWRA employment centre.

## 2017 TRIP TO LEBANON

Two board members and the project coordinator traveled to the DROPS office in Tripoli that took place in late March 2017. An internal evaluation and a field visit by at least one Swiss board member is done once a year. However, this was the first opportunity in many years for us to meet as a team. It had not been possible at an earlier date due to persistent security concerns that finally eased in 2017.

To make the most of this unique opportunity, we planned meetings with a diverse number of contacts so that we could engage them in person. During this field visit, we carried out an internal audit, discussed the strategic development of the organization with the local team and met with other NGOs, as well as representatives of donors and other key institutions in Beirut. Among all of our many exchanges, the most rewarding was the chance to meet and speak with juniors and local staff members. We brought back many precious memories and new ideas for the future of our organization.

We share with you just a few of the many moments from our inspiring visit.





Ayman, Bilal (Shift), Jenny and Lora look on from the balcony of a new co-working centre for social entrepreneurship that overlooks buildings that have been destroyed in the past. The rooftop will soon be transformed into a café where social events and meetings among community members from both sides can be hosted to help build peace in the conflict prone neighbourhoods.



First meeting between the Swiss and the Lebanese teams at the Restaurant Hadj



In Beddawi camp.



The DROPS Swiss team and director based in Lebanon on the way to meeting a donor in Beirut.



The agenda of the Swiss and Lebanon teams joint meeting and the director engaged in a discussion with the senior monitor.



## OUR TEAM IN 2017

During the General Assembly in February 2017, all Swiss board members confirmed their positions. With Lea Zanola as president, Jenny Bolliger as vice-president and Candace Chow, Ayman Hafiz and Beatrice Stauffer as board members, the DROPS Switzerland team has steered the organisation towards increasingly rewarding endeavours. We are thankful for the wide range of contributions from each of the members who work on a voluntary basis, and remain committed to the development of DROPS, while balancing busy work and personal schedules. Furthermore, Lora Slovak has continued to support the board with coordination, administrative and financial tasks. Due to increased demands in both Switzerland and in Lebanon, which reflect positive growth in the organization, her workload increased from 20 to 40% in 2017.

The core staff members of DROPS Lebanon have also remained constant. We are happy to have a very dedicated and knowledgeable local contingent. Most of the DROPS Lebanon staff members have been with organisation since the beginning of the Junior Program and have remained dedicated to our cause, despite occasional project setbacks. This is much appreciated! Towards the end of the year, we said goodbye to our two follow-up monitors, Rasha abu Sheikha and Hisham Saddiq. The two monitors assisted us with successfully realizing the objectives of the pilot phase of the follow-up monitoring component. We wish them all the best and thank them for their contributions.

2017 was particularly memorable as the two teams from Switzerland and Lebanon had the opportunity to meet in Tripoli and work side by side for the first time. We thank DROPS Lebanon for hosting such a wonderful team building experience. Both teams strengthened their connection with the chance to resolve challenges and to explore new ideas together.

The year ended on a very positive note with the annual Swiss team retreat that took place in Zürich. A strategic roadmap for the future years of the organisation was collectively drawn. We can't wait to see how all of our plans will be realized in the near future!

## FINANCES

We are happy that also in 2017 we could raise the money necessary for the successful implementation of our program. Despite the proven positive social impact of our program fundraising has increasingly become a challenge. There is a certain donor fatigue of dealing with perpetrating social problems that cannot be resolved without a viable political solution. The added value for the local population, however, is all the more important. It has also been difficult to communicate that a holistic approach is more sustainable in the long run, and that the relative high financial cost for a beneficiary goes to his or her personal development and to the creation of peaceful communities as a whole. Therefore we are all the more thankful to all our supporters.

In 2017 we have introduced the possibility for Paypal donation directly on our webpage: [www.drops.ch](http://www.drops.ch). Our bank details are as follows:

DROPS account: PC 85-793473-3

For international transfers: IBAN 4609000000857934733

## BALANCE SHEET (As of December 31, 2017)

All amounts expressed in Swiss Francs (CHF)

<b>ASSETS</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2016</b>
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash Lebanon	95.35	218.94
Postfinance CHF 85-793473-3	2,082.92	21,287.10
Postfinance USD 91-816845-7	4,184.92	4,437.39
Postfinance EUR	350.55	
<b>Cash Switzerland</b>	5.22	21.22
Transitory Assets	26,361.96	
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	33,080.92	25,964.65
<b>Total ASSETS</b>	33,080.92	25,964.65
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
<b>Liabilities for completion of projects</b>	-	-22,000.00
<b>Accrued liabilities</b>	-32,855.10	-3,254.35
Total liabilities	-32,855.10	-25,254.35
<b>Association's equity</b>		
Association capital	-710.30	-5,581.49
Net loss for the period	484.48	4,871.19
<b>Total accumulated profit / deficit</b>	484.48	4,871.19
<b>Total Associaton capital</b>	-225.82	-710.30
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND ASSET EQUITY</b>	<b>-33,080.92</b>	<b>-25,964.65</b>

Photo contributions from Studio Kaiss and DROPS staff