



SEENARYO

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“A week with these guys means many things to me, they gave us love, power, respect, fun... they gave us everything a person can imagine. Thanks guys and girls for being the best.”

Nidal, 18 years old, 2015 Seenaryo trainee (written on Facebook)

About Seenaryo

Seenaryo is a theatre project in Lebanon, initiated in 2015 with **75 Syrian and Palestinian refugee children and young adults**.

Seenaryo aims to **empower** refugees to build **original theatre shows** entirely from scratch, and build capacity amongst refugee groups by **training adults in arts teaching and leadership**.

At the heart of the project are weeklong **“showbuilds”** – intense, full-time courses during which groups of participants create their own shows entirely from scratch, and perform them at the end of the week to the local community.

Accompanying these showbuilds are training programmes for Syrian and Palestinian adults to build their arts and teaching skills; trainees continue be **mentored** throughout the year. The project is distinguished by its equal focus on an effective **process** and a complete **product**, and its cross-arts nature (with music, set design, choreography, writing and acting).

Background

Seenaryo was initiated by Victoria Lupton in collaboration with Oscar Wood, in response to invitations from two grassroots organisations in Lebanon: **Women Now**, an organisation supporting Syrian women and children set up by exiled Syrian novelist Samar Yazbek, and the **Yaabad Scout Troupe**, a self-organised group of over 100 Palestinian scouts in Shatila refugee camp, Beirut.

Why our work is important

Lebanon hosts the most refugees per capita of any country in the world – over two times more than any other country. Hosting over **1.15 million refugees from Syria** since 2011, on top of the **half-million Palestinians** who were already living in the country before then, **refugees in Lebanon make up about a quarter of the population.**

All this against a background of the highest levels of global displacement ever recorded:

“We are witnessing a paradigm change, an unchecked slide into an era in which the scale of global forced displacement as well as the response required is now clearly dwarfing anything seen before.”

António Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees



International support for refugees in the countries, like Lebanon, bordering Syria is nowhere near as high as it should be, with the UNHCR and the World Food Programme notoriously cutting aid to millions of Syrians because of huge funding shortfalls.

Syrian refugees in Lebanon are therefore living in contexts of often extreme deprivation, with women and children particularly affected:

- In 2015, **70%** of refugee households in Lebanon live way below the **national poverty line** – a huge jump from 50% in 2014
- **68%** of working-age Syrian women in Lebanon are **unemployed**
- **88%** of employed Syrians work in the **unskilled, unregulated** informal sector and are therefore vulnerable to exploitation
- Average wages for working women are just **\$164** per month
- **Early marriage** or **prostitution** for young women is increasingly common
- **66%** of school-aged refugees receive **no formal education**
- Many children are being forced into work or begging and withdrawn from school

All statistics are taken from UNHCR and WFP reports and the Oxford University Refugees Studies Centre

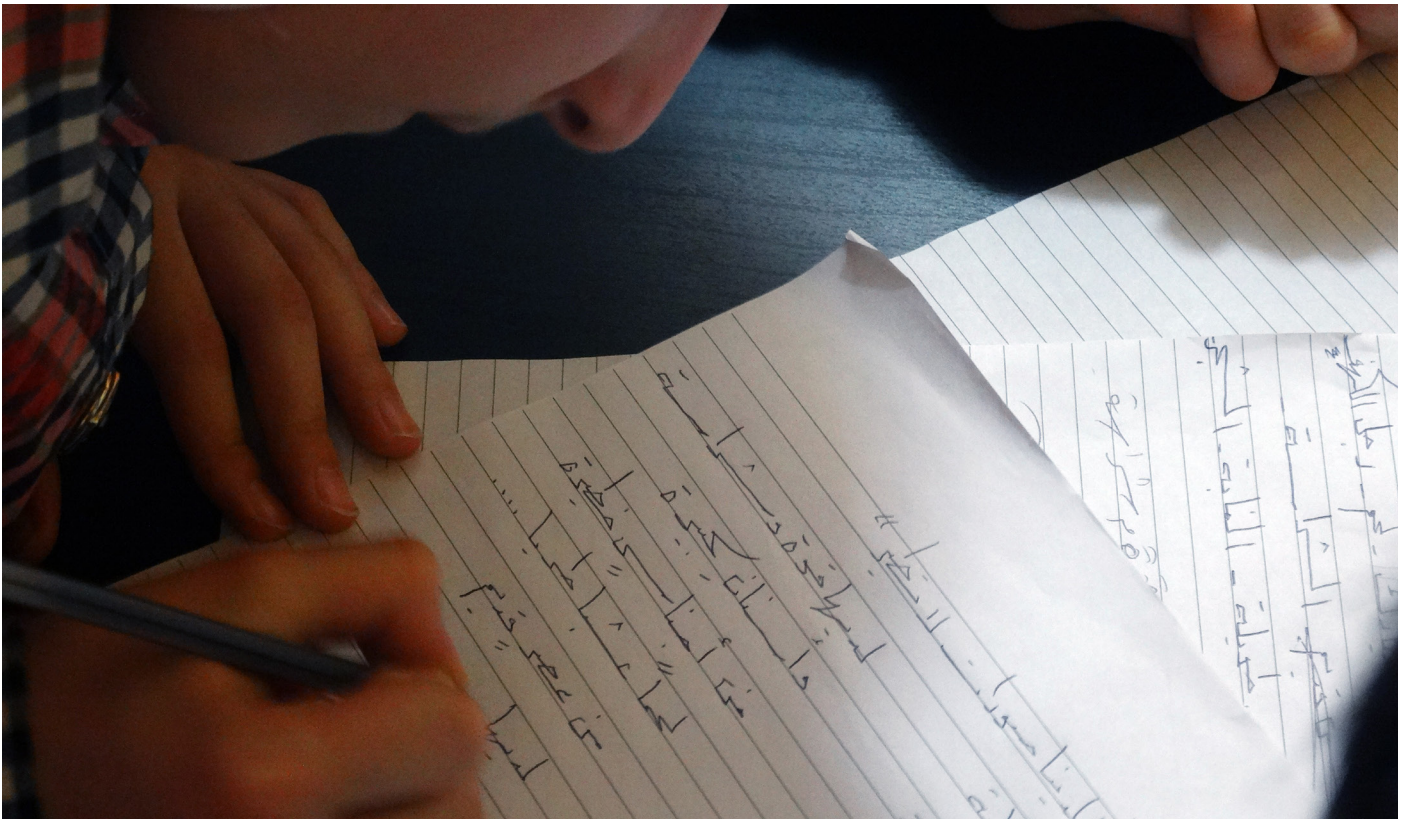
In this context of discrimination and humiliation, the focus of aid is almost exclusively towards satisfying basic needs: food, shelter, healthcare and basic education. Seenaryo believes that there is an **urgent need for cultural projects and arts education** amongst refugees in Lebanon, to support **personal development**, to foster social cohesion, to **train a future generation of leaders**, and to **allow people's stories to be heard**.

Project Objectives

- Creating **powerful** and **high-quality theatre productions**
- **Empowering** groups of children and women in terms of **life skills** as well as psycho-socially and creatively, by introducing an innovative, cross-arts method of participatory theatre-making.
- **Building capacity** amongst Syrian and Palestinian communities in Lebanon, by training young adults from refugee communities in Lebanon to build skills to lead their own workshops.
- Fostering **social cohesion** within Syrian and Palestinian communities, by building theatre troupes and inviting their families, friends and the local communities as audiences.

Seenaryo in 2015

Seenaryo launched with 2 showbuilds in August. Both showbuilds took place over **5 days** (Monday to Friday) and culminated in hour-long performances on the final day, featuring 6 songs and 6 scenes, choreography and set. Showbuilds were followed by a one day intensive training sessions on Saturday with the trainees.



Shatila in brief

- **31** Palestinian and Syrian-Palestinian participants aged **8-14 years old**
- **4** Palestinian trainees aged **17-20 years old**
- Play title: *Be Careful What You Wish For*
- Performance to a local audience of around 100 people on Friday 7th August.

Chtaura in brief

- **35** Syrian children aged **7-14 years old**
- **3** Syrian trainees aged **20-27 years old**
- Play title: *Village of Wonders*
- Performance to a local audience of around 220 people on Friday 14th August.

Impact: Beneficiaries

With a small budget, Seenaryo in 2015 has had over **70 direct beneficiaries**: 31 participant children in Shatila and 35 in Chtaura; and 7 trainees. However, the indirect reach of the project is far greater. Indirect beneficiaries include:

- Leaders of the grassroots organisations with whom we are working (Yaabad Scout Troupe and Women Now), who benefit from a new model of facilitation to use throughout the year
- Other children led by the 8 trainees, who benefit from their new knowledge and skills: Yaabad includes over 100 scouts, and Women Now serves over 500 people in the Bekaa area, all of whom come into contact with some of the trainees
- The parents of children involved in the project, who in the case of Women Now are able to pursue work or courses during these days as their children are cared for



“I’ve really had a wonderful week with you and fun forever. Without you, we would not have a fantastic performance. Thank you for all your efforts and your energy and your information which you gave.”

Farah, 14, Seenaryo 2015 participant (written on Facebook, 8th August 2015)

Impact: Sustained Development
Seenaryo does not finish at the end of the week-long showbuild. The project is a **long-term commitment to and investment in two refugee groups.**

We provide mentorship and advice throughout the year. Direct knock-on effects of Seenaryo in 2015 include:



- With Seenaryo's support, Yaabad Scout Troupe are re-working the play they built with Seenaryo, *Be Careful What You Wish For*, in Autumn 2015 **in preparation to tour the play** around refugee camps in Lebanon in January 2016
- Two Seenaryo participants from 2015 have been invited to join a weekly **contemporary dance group** in a Beirut dance centre organised by Seenaryo's choreographer Clara Sfeir.
- Designer Léa Kradokian has been invited to **paint a mural** on a long wall in Shatila camp with Seenaryo participants in the coming months.
- We have produced an extensive **Seenaryo training pack**, which features details of all games and devising exercises, guides to behaviour management and descriptions of performance and directing techniques conveyed during training sessions. We have **translated these into Arabic** and shared them with all our trainees, who are starting to use them in developing new shows.



- We have also produced **specially-tailored schedules and workplans** for the trainee groups to build new productions, based on their skills, needs and time
- Seenaryo's group of Syrian **trainees** are starting to develop **plans for a new theatre production**, using the skills we introduced to them, which they will build and perform in January 2016.



The Team

The Seenaro is a growing group of British and Lebanese artists and teachers, and includes:

Tim Bamber (music director) is a sound artist and composer who works across film, theatre, dance, installation and music. He is currently Sound Director for now>press>play, who create curricular experiences for UK school children using wireless headphones.

Lea Kradokian (set designer) is a Lebanese product designer and the founder of Junk Munkez, which designs and showcases eco-friendly products.

Victoria Lupton (co-director) is a cultural producer and theatre-maker based between Lebanon and the UK. Having spent 3 years as Assistant Director of Ashkal Alwan – The Lebanese Association for Plastic Arts, she works on a variety of cultural projects in the UK and Lebanon and speaks fluent Arabic, French and English. She has worked with Upstage Performance Group since 2007.

Clara Sfeir (choreographer) is a contemporary dancer and choreographer who has been teaching contemporary dance in Lebanon and internationally since 2010 and is a founder of Beirut Contact Improvisation Sessions.

Oscar Wood (co-director) is a music and theatre facilitator, and educational consultant. He is artistic director of Upstage Performance Group who deliver out-of-school 'showbuilds' as well as three flagship vocal projects for the London borough of Tower Hamlets. He executes the vocal strategy for the London borough of Newham.



What Next? Plans for 2016

Essential to Seenaryo is a responsiveness to the needs and invitations of the refugee groups. Based on their comments and needs, we have been invited to return to work with both groups in summer 2016, with a developed theatre programme building on the first year's successes:

Shatila

We plan to build a new production with the Yaabad Scouts. However, we will work this time with an older group of participants age **14-17**. This will allow us to work more **intensely** with their ideas, to give them an even greater **collaborative** role in all aspects of the process (set, choreography, music, etc), to make the final product more **professional** (with touring potential) and to give them a more thorough performance training. Importantly, we aim to work towards the **establishment of a permanent theatre troupe in Shatila with this group of participants**.

Chtaura

In response to the **immense need for teacher training in Syrian schools in the Bekaa Valley** and to requests from Women Now for us to work with their women members as well as their children, we are planning the following initiatives in Chtaura in 2016:

- A shorter, **3-day showbuild** for **30 children** age **11-14**, culminating in a half-hour performance
- An intensive, **3-day teacher training** for **30 Syrian teachers** working with Women Now, introducing them to **behaviour management and arts teaching techniques**. The training will be designed for more experienced teachers as well as those with no educational background before coming to Lebanon
- A **2-week showbuild** with a group of **30 adult women** selected by Women Now. This **ground-breaking new project will be a collaboration between the participants, a renowned UK director and a Syrian playwright**, and will lead to performances in Chtaura, in a major Beirut theatre, and possibly in London.

Supporting Seenaryo

Seenaryo is managed on a small budget and is supported by a combination of foundations, in-kind supporters and generous individuals. We are seeking to establish **more sustainable funding partnerships** in future to enable us to look ahead into the longer-term.

To this end, we are approaching a number of foundations and international organisations to support us in this hugely exciting stage of growth. However, we rely on our individual friends and supporters to allow these theatre projects to take place. **We are actively seeking new supporters to give to the project with a donation of £200, £500 or £1000.**

All donations are acknowledged on our website, programmes, films and all publicity materials, and we organise an **annual screening and supper event** for all supporters to watch the Seenaryo performances together and meet the Seenaryo team. If you can make it to Lebanon, we would also love to invite all our supporters to watch our original performances!

If you would like to join our family of friends and supporters, please contact **Victoria Lupton** at seenaryo@gmail.com or call **+44 7733322827**.

Seenaryo Supporters in 2015:

Sophie & Nigel Meek | European Cultural Foundation | marra.tein | Anonymous | Jai | Zico

Friends of Seenaryo in 2015:

Hanan Abdalla | Alex Archer | Jacqueline Bouvy | Louis Brooke | Josh Cole | Pansy Cooper | Laura Dowley | George Duncan-Jones | Victoria Elvidge | Josh Glancy | Ed Hancox | Jessica Harvey | The Jackson-Kay Family | Richard & Patti Latham | James & Beatrice Lupton | Chris Mazeika | Emily Monk | Charlotte Nourse | Yasmina Reggad | Willi Richards | Mary Rose & Charles Wood

