



# Newsletter

April 2017

ASSABIL Friends of Public Libraries Association is a non-governmental organization established in 1997 to promote reading, in particular through the establishment, promotion and support of public libraries in Lebanon that are free and open to all.

Intensive, diversified, growing – these words describe best what ASSABIL's projects in 2016 looked like. The Municipal Public Libraries of Beirut have seen busy times:

- 28,000 visitors were welcomed at the three libraries of Bachoura, Geitawi and Monot,
- 44,000 titles were offered,
- 122 cultural events were attended by more than 1,900 participants,
- 1580 children took part in our weekly storytelling sessions held in all three libraries,
- 158 school classes with more than 2,700 pupils from public schools were received and
- Book rentals have gone up by 20 % between 2015 and 2016 and reached 19,439 books in 2016.



Thanks to book donations from individuals and institutions ASSABIL is able to support the partner libraries with new titles, however, we are receiving very few books in Arabic language – for children and adults alike – which are very much in demand. Please don't hesitate to contact our main office – 01 644 647 – in case you have any Arabic books in good conditions that can be donated to our libraries.  
**Thank you for your support!**

**WE NEED  
YOUR  
SUPPORT**

## Fighting Xenophobia at Kotobus and our Libraries

In 2016 the Municipal Public Libraries as well as the mobile library have seen a particular focus on the promotion of our libraries as inclusive spaces, spaces where all are welcome, disregarding their social backgrounds and nationalities. Indeed, it is necessary to counter incidents of racism that occur at our libraries.



Therefore, with the financial support of the Anna Lindh Foundation as well as OCHA (UN), our librarians were trained on how to spot and address xenophobic and racist behaviors at the libraries, and how to interact and deal with mixed groups. Over the course of 6 months a series of creative workshops for children and teenagers brought together youth from different population groups – Lebanese, Syrians and Palestinians – to work together, to discover as a group, different tools and means of creative expression and create joint artworks and performances addressing the topics of xenophobia and racism in their daily lives.

[Watch our video on YouTube](#)

## Public Libraries as Spaces of Debate

Thanks to the support of the Anna Lindh Foundation, Beirut's Municipal Public Libraries were once more spaces of debate. In line with the mission of ASSABIL, to promote public libraries as spaces of expression, 28 youth took part in a debate club program. The participants benefited from an intensive training on debating techniques and skills and have successfully created debate clubs at their schools and libraries. After being trained they brainstormed and selected topics relevant to their daily lives, including issues such as citizenship, school and the environment.



The project culminated in a public debate held at the Monot Theatre in May 2016 which was attended by their peers, families and friends.

## Jihad Darwish – Capacity Building for Lebanon's Storytellers



ASSABIL has organized an intensive training program for professional storytellers under the direction of Jihad Darwish, an acclaimed expert in the field. 12 storytellers took part in a 5 day training program and have held storytelling events for adults and children in libraries in Beirut, the regions and Palestinian refugee camps alike.

The training enabled some participants to increase their monthly incomes with a new job opportunity – storytelling! Given this great success and demand ASSABIL is seeking to continue this kind of trainings and activities in 2017 and the coming years. This training was part of a program implemented by the Qattan Foundation and the Prince Claus Fund and financed by "صلات: روابط من خلال الفن", with co-financing from the Welfare Association.

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### Horsh Beirut Festival

In September 2016, the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of ASSABIL's annual Horsh Beirut Festival took place. A 2 day program filled from mornings to evenings attracted families from the surrounding areas and Beirut. The event was generously funded by the Heinrich Boell Foundation and Welfare Association and was attended by some 7,000 visitors. We let the pictures talk for themselves...



[Read more...](#)

### Introducing Open Source Cataloguing Systems to Libraries in the Palestinian Camps

Throughout March and April 2017, ASSABIL and Welfare Association are training librarians from the Palestinian Libraries on an Open Source Cataloguing System – KOHA – that is currently introduced in Lebanon.

## A Big THANK YOU to our Long-Time Strategic Partners

ASSABIL is greatly benefiting from the support of and cooperation with some strategic partners with whom we have worked over many years to pursue our mission of promoting public libraries, and promoting them as active and lively public spaces, spaces for education, for culture, and for debate.

We are proud to count the **Municipality of Beirut** as our main partner for the operation of Beirut's Municipal Public libraries.

The **Heinrich Boell Foundation** has been supporting ASSABIL's work for more than 10 years and has provided great help in institutional support, training and activity programs. Since 2016 the Foundation is also greatly involved in the annual Horsh Beirut Festival.

2016 has seen the consolidation of our strategic partnership with the **Welfare Association**. What has started as an effort to improve the public libraries in 7 Palestinian camps for which the Welfare Association has sought the consultation and advice of ASSABIL in 2008, has become a lasting and important partnership.

We would like to take this opportunity to say THANK YOU for their trust, commitment and cooperative work!

## Introducing New Team Members



**Sarah Touma** is in charge of ASSABIL's financial administration since September 2016 and thanks to her great organizational skills she makes our chores easier. Thank you Sarah for all your efforts and for the constant smile on your face!

After a one year long maternity break, **Doris Summer**, who had joined ASSABIL in 2007, is back as part-time team member to assist the team in project development, writing and reporting tasks.

We are happy to announce the promotion of Mr. **Ali Sabbagh** to the Executive Coordination of ASSABIL. Ali Sabbagh joined our team in 2005 as the activity coordinator at the Bachoura library and has continuously enlarged the scope of his tasks and responsibilities thanks to his great enthusiasm, engagement and dedication. We wish him the best of luck in his new role!

**Mohammad Zaher** has joined our team at the Head Offices in Ras el-Nabaa as the new activity coordinator for the Beirut Libraries and the Network of Partner Libraries. Given his great motivation to promote our libraries as dynamic spaces and thanks to his kindness, we sure look forward to an innovative and refreshing new program of activities in the future.