

The Environment Unit

was formed at the Lajee Center in 2013, focusing on expanding opportunities for young people to learn how to solve environmental problems in their communities. Specific issues addressed in the project include water management, food security, and recycling. The program combines training high school and college graduates in environmental technology skills and providing ways for them to apply those skills in specific projects. Over 250 young people - boys and girls - have been involved from Aida and Azza camps, and Walaja village.

The Environment Unit projects include:

The Water Lab, which tests the biological, physical, and chemical properties of drinking water. Expanding this program with additional funds will enable existing labs to be updated to conduct more sophisticated pathogen testing and to use the results of those tests to create a water quality index. The result of these updates will be that Water Lab is able to serve the wider two million plus population of the West Bank.

The Food and Recycling Project, which builds rooftop gardens and greenhouses, and develops market-ready products manufactured from second-use recycled waste. Recycling activities include a public education campaign on soil composting and the benefits of recycling organic and inorganic materials such as wood, paper, tires, and bottles, repurposing them into saleable products. Rehabilitating existing rooftop gardens and greenhouses to higher functioning levels have increased food

security and support locally driven demands for chemical-free fruits and vegetables. Updates to the project will increase the number of trained recyclers while also decreasing the prevalence of dry garbage and waste in living areas of local refugee camps.

The Environment Education Initiative, which raises awareness of environmental issues with K-12 students and teachers, the general public, and policy makers. A three-day environmental fair is held to promote farmer's market-type produce grown by rooftop and greenhouse gardeners; to highlight the launch of public urban rooftop green spaces; and to present a women's focused program on repurposing recycled materials. Expanding education on the environment through the festival will increase local knowledge of environmental issues while providing new markets for rooftop and greenhouse garden-based produce and furniture made from recycled materials.

The Lajee Center Environment Unit

in Aida Refugee Camp, Bethlehem, Palestine



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Environmental Program - Goals for the Future

Funding Priority: Water Quality and Testing

The goal is to develop advanced water testing capabilities for refugees in additional UN-run refugee camps in the West Bank. We aim to increase the capacity of our current lab at the Lajee Center, 1for3's partner, in Aida refugee camp. The lab will be updated with equipment and staff training to enable better analysis of water samples testing for the presence of toxic elements as well as for other standard measures of water quality.

This sophisticated work will require needed instruments and supporting materials, and training new staff to work with them. The updated and expanded lab will enable us to service a population of over two million. The expanded capability will also enable the Water Lab to be financially self-sustaining due to the market need for water testing in the West Bank.

Funding Priority: Rooftop and Greenhouse Gardens, and Recycling Program

This funding priority is focused on enhancing food sustainability for urban residents. Expanding 1for3's existing rooftop and greenhouse garden program, and its recycling program, will expand and enhance food production and the composting of food waste. Since 2014, 1for3 has built 33 rooftop gardens, and some greenhouses, for needy families in Aida and Azza, the densely built UN-run refugee camps.

Given the need for healthy food options residents of the camps require more opportunities to grow chemical-free food for their families. To accomplish this goal, we will rehabilitate and expand rooftop gardens and

greenhouses, promote composting, and develop a maintenance program based on community education and skills training.

Related to the development of rooftop gardens is expanding the repurposing of urban waste materials such as wood and metal products. Increasing the existing recycling program to focus on training ten women and ten high school aged youth will enhance the manufacture and sale of indoor and outdoor furniture products made from inorganic waste materials. The creation and sale of these products is already taking place.

Funding Priority: Environment Education Initiative

To support long-term cultural change on public perceptions of the environment, 1for3 is developing an education program. The Environment Education Initiative is composed of two parts. The first part consists of developing an education curriculum on the environment rooted in 1for3's programs and in the local geography. The second is an environment festival, which is a three-day program that takes place in September of each year and highlights local environmental issues and how 1for3's programs are assisting in their development. We are seeking funds to further develop both elements of this program.



Program Sustainability

The Environment Unit programs are designed to serve as immediate solutions to societal problems and to provide resources for long-term generational change. As students complete their participation in the Unit's programs they are approaching college age. The Lajee Center has an established education scholarship program, helping to defray the costs of further education for students studying environment-related topics.

Having been participants and mentors, many students have developed life-long commitments to environmental activity. Some of our staff have returned to help raise the next generation.

Another strength of the Lajee Center Environment Unit is found in the relationships developed with other organizations including the Pontifical Mission, ARIJ, Al-Awda, and the Palestine Foundation. In addition to these program partners, 1for3 has vibrant research partnerships with US-based water and environment academic centers including Tufts University in the US and York University in the UK.

With these collaborations in place we are confident that the Environment Unit's programs will be sustained into the future.