

Ali's Story*

Ali lives in Souf Camp. It is one of six emergency camps built in Jordan since 1948 for Palestinian refugees. Through the years, over 1.8 million people have arrived in the camps.

Every day, Ali works at a falafel restaurant. He fries chickpea patties, makes sandwiches, and cleans up. He works 8 hours a day during the school year and 12 hours a day during his summer break. While Ali works, he can see his friends laughing as they kick a soccer ball on the dusty streets. He wants to join them, but cannot. Ali knows that he must work to help his family make ends meet, because severe back and eyesight problems prevent his father from working.

For Ali, working long hours every day means more than having less time to play and be a teenager. Working has also been dangerous to his health—two years ago he nearly lost his hand when he dozed off while grinding chickpeas. Luckily, he was rushed to the hospital and his hand was saved.

Life for the 17,000 people living in Souf is difficult. Job opportunities are limited and some refugees take temporary jobs in neighboring farms. They pick olives and work the land.

For the 3,400 teenagers in the camp, there are few places to meet and socialize. So, when a project designed to teach teenage boys and girls about filmmaking was started at Souf Camp, the young people there were happy. They began by brainstorming a good topic for their film. At the end, they decided to make a film featuring children who have to work to support their families.

The teenagers chose Ali as the main character. Then they wrote the script and did the filming, editing, and translation. "We wanted to reach out, make people living outside the camps know what our lives are like," says Ali.

* Source: UNICEF Voices of Youth, http://www.unicef.org/voy/explore/sowc06/explore_2475.html

Directions:

Using the information in the previous article, answer the following questions:

1. What are the main problems that Ali has faced as he works to support his family?

2. Do you think working in the restaurant should be considered “hazardous” labor? Why or why not?

3. Do you think Ali gets any benefits from working? Why or why not?

4. How could the film project help Ali and other young people in the camp?
