A ROLLING ROCK حجر يتدحرج

Volunteering with ClimbAID in Lebanon

March 2021
1. The Project

Through ClimbAID’s activities, socially disadvantaged and often war-disabled youth get a new perspective, train their perseverance and acquire competencies that are also valuable in everyday life. Through climbing, we foster not only physical strength, but also their mind and community values.

1.1. Refugee Crisis in Lebanon

Lebanon is made up of 4 million Lebanese, 1.1 to 2.0 million Syrian refugees, 0.3 to 0.5 million Palestinian refugees and about 0.5 million domestic migrant workers. These figures make it the country with the highest concentration of refugees per capita worldwide. More than 75% of Syrian refugees in Lebanon are women and children. The Lebanese economy and infrastructure in all sectors (education, health, housing, electricity and water supply) is struggling under the pressure of so many refugees. Competition for already scarce resources is contributing towards increased tensions between the host and refugee communities, making peace and resilience building an increasingly important component in the response strategy of the humanitarian community.

Due to the Lebanese no-camp policy\(^1\), Syrian refugees live scattered across the country in unfinished buildings, garage apartments, informal tented settlements and warehouses. In most cases they pay exorbitant rent for extremely substandard living conditions. According to UNHCR over 70% of Syrian refugees lived below the poverty line in 2016 earning less than $3 USD/day\(^2\).

According to UNHCR, among the Syrian refugees registered in Lebanon more than 500,000 are children and teenagers between 0 to 17 years, and an estimated 50% have no access to any form of education. Access to healthcare is extremely limited due to the high costs, geographical challenges and coverage restrictions. Treatment for many severe physical diseases (birth defects, cancer, renal failure, etc.) are not covered by governmental or international organization’s healthcare services, nor is treatment for mental health disorders (PTSD, depression, anxiety, etc.) suffered by many refugees who have escaped the terror of war zones.

Children and youth are among the most vulnerable refugees. Although they often find safety in the host countries, they require additional support to overcome the distressing experiences they have faced, including violence, abuse, exploitation and family separation. While displaced in Lebanon they frequently continue to face child protection risks including child labour, violence in their homes and schools, early marriage and gender-based violence.

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1.2. Lebanon Today

The general outlook for Lebanon in the foreseeable future is pessimistic. Political, economic and social conditions are expected to worsen: the number of vulnerable people and the extent of vulnerability have been rising and are expected to continue on this upward trend. This also means that the security situation is becoming more unpredictable and volatile.

After a hard and strict lockdown that was imposed from the start of January 2021 up until the end of February, the Lebanese authorities are now easing lockdown restrictions gradually in phases.

1.3. Climbing for Peace

It is against the above background that ClimbAID seeks to address the needs of vulnerable populations in Lebanon. ClimbAID works with children (9 to 12) and youth (13 to 18+) from different backgrounds to help them combat previous and ongoing trauma and depression, while also helping them build resilience and psycho-social well-being through climbing. In addition, our participants get a new perspective and acquire personal and social competencies that are also valuable in everyday life.

More information: www.climbaid.org/ROCK

ClimbAID was founded in September 2016 with the purpose of giving young refugees in Lebanon a new perspective. Since then, ClimbAID has reached more than 2000 refugees and people from other vulnerable populations with its projects in Switzerland, Lebanon and Greece.

2. Volunteering in Lebanon

2.1. Who we are looking for

- Climbers and climbing instructors ideally with a background in psychotherapy, psychological counselling, social work, education and life coaching.
- Those with skills and experience in monitoring and evaluation, sport for development programming, media production, and general project management.
- Those with language skills in Arabic (dialect), English and French as well as any work or volunteer experience in the humanitarian sector are very much appreciated and valued.
- All volunteers should be physically and mentally fit to perform in a challenging environment. You should be able to work independently, in a team, and be able to improvise and adapt.
- For other potential projects, e.g., building permanent climbing walls, we are looking for carpenters and people familiar working with building tools and materials.
- Donations including gear (climbing shoes, holds, etc.) are always welcome!
For the protection of the emotional stability of its beneficiaries, ClimbAID has decided to extend the minimum volunteering window to 10 weeks. This extension will decrease the turnover of volunteers, which will give the beneficiaries consistency and stability with their interactions and relationships with ClimbAID volunteers.

2.2. What to expect

- The experiences you will have and the relationships you will build with the beneficiaries, the local communities, and the country overall, will be profound and meaningful.
- You will be working five days a week. During the week there’s no time for sight-seeing or exploring the country.
- Delivering the sessions and route setting requires frequent heavy lifting. Ensure that you are physically fit to perform heavy lifting duties as required.
- Weekends are reserved for volunteers to travel and climb around Lebanon. ClimbAID’s weekends may not align with typical weekend days (i.e. Saturday and Sunday) in order to accommodate the availability of our beneficiaries.
- Ad-hoc tasks may also be required depending on the evolving objectives e.g. media production, fundraising, concept writing, competition preparation, exploring the area for climbing spots, building a permanent climbing wall, etc.
- In order to guarantee communication between team members in the field, you will be required to buy a local SIM card with data (costs about USD 10 / month).
- Volunteers usually have their own private rooms (no guarantee).

2.3. Packing List

2.3.1. Work

- During your work in the field, you will be exposed to high levels of dust and dirt. Bring robust pants, t-shirts, sweaters and headgear (hats, buffs etc). Female volunteers need to wear pants that cover the knees. You will receive a ClimbAID T-Shirt that you are required to wear during the sessions.
- Bring trainers or approach shoes. Wearing open shoes, especially during outdoor bouldering sessions, is not advisable. Your feet will thank you for comfortable climbing shoes for the sessions.
- Important: please bring an international driver's license.

2.3.2. Accommodation

- ClimbAID rents a house/apartment for all volunteers in which beds and/or mattresses are provided. Bring a sleeping bag.

2.3.3. Weekends

- Lebanon is a beautiful Mediterranean country. The climate is temperate, with hot summers, agreeable autumn and fall seasons and delightfully white winters. There is
much to see and do in Lebanon, and everything is close by: there is the sea, the mountains with their marvellous limestone cliffs, the old traditional villages and markets, the warm hospitable people and the delicious and healthy cuisine.

- Weekends are usually spent camping and climbing. Bring your sports climbing equipment including rope, quickdraws, climbing shoes, chalk etc.
- Bring a tent, sleeping bag and sleeping mat.
- If you are concerned about space in your luggage, message the volunteers’ WhatsApp group before arriving to coordinate with present and future volunteers.

2.4. Logistics

2.4.1. Getting to Lebanon
- Take a plane to Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport or inform yourself about the ferry coming from Turkey.
- No specific volunteer visa exists. Enter the country as a tourist. Fill in the address of the ClimbAID house (to be confirmed before arrival) into the required application form at customs.
- You will be refused entry at customs if you have travelled to Israel and have an Israeli stamp in your passport. Please discuss this with us if you have any concerns about your travel history.
- Our apartment in Chtoura is approximately a 1-hour drive from Beirut. If your flight to Beirut arrives early in the morning or late at night, we can arrange a taxi that takes you directly to our home.
- During the day you can take a taxi to the Cola bus station in Beirut. From there you take a bus to Chtoura.
- In any case, get in touch with ClimbAID to organise your transportation ahead. Don’t take a taxi at the airport. They will rip you off.

2.4.2. Accommodation and Transportation
- We do our best to provide affordable accommodation for the ClimbAID team. Approximate costs: $6.50 / night.
- Getting around Lebanon is difficult without a car. The occasional use of ClimbAID’s passenger car on weekends is allowed. If necessary, a rental car – usually around $10 to 20 / day can be hired.

2.5. Security Situation
- The social and political situation is tense. Since 17 October 2019 there have been demonstrations, roadblocks and strikes throughout the country.
- Inform yourself about the political situation in Lebanon. We are happy to discuss any questions in the information call.
● Upon your arrival, you will receive a security briefing with detailed information about the current situation in the country and our rules of conduct.

● ClimbAID has measures in place to protect the personal safety of their beneficiaries, staff and volunteers.

● Living quarters for the volunteers have been chosen to be situated in a safe and quiet neighbourhood.

● There will be regular security briefings, and the programmes and projects will be adjusted according to the developing circumstances to ensure the safety of the beneficiaries, staff and volunteers.

● You are required to inform your country’s embassy about your stay in Lebanon.

2.6. Costs and Expenses

● ClimbAID aims to channel most of its funds to its beneficiaries and programmes, and it actively seeks to keep administrative and overhead costs to a minimum. Therefore, it is necessary for you to be able to cover your own living costs. The severe devaluation of the Lebanese currency made local goods and services very cheap.

● A budget of $400 / month should comfortably cover your expenses for food and beverages, accommodation, transportation and communication.

2.6.1. Accommodation

● We do our best to provide affordable accommodation for the ClimbAID team. Approximate costs: $ 6.50 / night.

2.6.2. Transportation

3. Getting around Lebanon is difficult without a car. The occasional use of ClimbAID’s passenger car on weekends is allowed. If necessary, a rental car – usually around $10 to 20 / day can be hired.

3.1.1. Food and Beverages

● House food: We usually shop and cook together and share our expenses for food, drinks and other household necessities.

3.1.2. Communication

4. In order to guarantee communication between team members in the field, you will be required to buy a local SIM card with data (costs about USD 10 / month).

4.1.1. Currency

● The purchasing power of the Lebanese pound has plummeted since October 2019 and banks have been limiting the withdrawal of USDs.

● Bring USD in cash.
4.1.2. Health and Travel Insurance
● You are required to purchase health and travel insurance before arriving in Lebanon. ClimbAID does not have the capacity to assume liability for anything that may happen.
● Confirm that your insurance covers Lebanon and specifically the Beqaa Valley.

4.2. Code of Conduct and Tips

4.2.1. Culture
● Lebanon is culturally more conservative than most European and Western countries. Please be aware and respectful of local social norms. As foreign guests we work within the existing culture and do not impose our own culture and expectations on the local communities.

4.2.2. Security Situation
● Please refer to 2.5. above.
● Upon your arrival, you will receive a security briefing with detailed information about the current situation in the country and our rules of conduct.

4.2.3. For female volunteers
● Be aware that women dress more conservatively in Lebanon and across most Middle Eastern countries. When working with local communities:
  o Keep your shoulders covered, if it’s hot wear a scarf
  o Wear loose pants/skirts/dresses well past the knee
  o In some cases, wearing a ring will make things easier

4.2.4. Media
● Publishing photos and video material on private social media channels depicting ClimbAID’s projects, its participants and activities requires the consent of ClimbAID.
● Do not take pictures of any military personnel or bases or official buildings like municipalities or their staff.
● Do not take pictures in orange zone areas like Shatila in Southern Beirut or any other Palestinian settlements.

4.2.5. Academic, journalistic projects, etc.
● Get in touch with us if you intend to use your volunteer stay to further your own work, studies or project. We expect full transparency from your side with regards to your motivation for joining the project.

1. Next Steps
● Have you read the whole document?
● Do you understand your role and the logistics of being in Lebanon?
● Do you understand all the security risks?
● If you have any unanswered questions please email us at info@climbaid.org.

To be able to coordinate the arrival and schedule of volunteers, please fill in the online application form and send us a message to info@climbaid.org with your name in the subject link.

The following link will take you to the online application: www.climbaid.org/volunteer

We look forward to having you with us in the team!