

2022 International Mission Partner Report – Aprender

The Philemon Project – Grow Preschool

From Robert and Joyce Hamd, Co-executive directors, the [Philemon Project](#) who fund and support the Grow Preschool in Bourj Hammoud, Beirut, supporting refugee and migrant children.



“We are so grateful to Phil, Rachel and everyone at Aprender for all the support and valuable training you have given our staff at GROW. Since its inception in 2013, GROW

has been dedicated to the best practices for Early Childhood Development--specifically providing opportunities for play for each child and creating spaces where each child has agency. Our founders were inspired by the devastating scenes they discovered in illegal uncertified daycare--scenes of children tied to chairs and restricted from play. When Phil and Rachel were recommended by our site manager, we were thrilled to receive their input and training. Since then, GROW Centre's teachers and staff have all implemented the active learning approach, and there has been a marked difference in the centre.

Robert and Joyce Hamd, US-based Executive Directors and founders of the Centre, came for a visit in the summer of 2021. Due to the pandemic, it was the first time they had been to the Centre since the implementation of the new active learning approach. As Joyce entered a classroom and sat down with a child, she began to ask questions. Immediately, both a teacher and Mrs. Mireille (our Director and an APTO coach in training) corrected Joyce and said, "Mrs. Joyce, we have a new practice. Please simply narrate the child's play as she is sitting with you." As Joyce and Robert continued their visit, they saw and felt a significant shift in the Centre. The atmosphere was charged with a new energy; children were playing as usual, but they were also benefiting from the narration of the teachers, sitting nearby. Later on, Joyce and Robert were astounded as they observed "reflection.time" of the children. They heard as the children, in their own words, reported their choices during playtime, and even the conflicts they experienced and how they felt during them.

We are so very grateful for Aprender's invaluable input into our staff and leadership. Our confidence in the change that these new practices has wrought in the children's life spurs us on to continue receiving training and growing as an Aprender-supported centre.