

Mental Health Conference May 2015, Beirut, Lebanon

The headline for the 9th Annual Conference on Mental Health in Beirut was “Towards a better wellbeing: Inter-sectorial approaches in Mental Health”.

Through presentations and practical workshops, more than 20 speakers from Lebanon, Palestine, France, Norway, Finland, USA, England, Japan and Singapore shedded light on how multidisciplinary approaches could contribute to wellbeing. Representatives from local and international NGOs and agencies attended this annual event. The conference was hosted by The National Institution of Social Care and Vocational Training (NISCVT) and was sponsored by NORWAC.

Forum, represented by Sophie Rodin, presented the project *My Book, My Voice* and gave a workshop.

This project has been carried out in different groups in Norway and Lebanon.

In Lebanon, the participants have been teachers and social workers, as well as children and youth in the target groups: Palestinians and Syrians attending remedial classes or popular education.

In Norway, the project has been directed towards asylum seekers in refugee centres.

The aim is to reflect on experiences, the present situation, memories or hopes, through visual art, and if possible, in a combination with creative writing.

At the end of a workshop, the participants collect their art work and create their own personal book. The book is a documentation of the process, and a possibility to share ones written and visual expressions with the rest of the group or others. It also aims to broaden the perception of what a book might be: something personal and relevant. It can also broaden the perception of possibilities in the visual language and different ways of communication.

The project is directed towards people in need of a way to express their stories and traumas where words are insufficient.

The method can also be used as a pedagogical tool in more academic subjects, like writing and reading, to incite motivation and interest.