

Annual Activity Report 2019



*The Domari Society
of Gypsies in Jerusalem*

General information

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Domari Society of Gypsies in Jerusalem

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The Domari Society
of Gypsies in Jerusalem

Brief description of the organization

Domari Society of Gypsies in Jerusalem was founded in the year 2000 by Amoun Sleem. She is a Dom herself and has experienced first-hand the severe discrimination, cultural marginalization, poverty and adult illiteracy among the society. Her familiarity with the needs of Dom community was the impetus for her dream of founding the Domari Society.

In 1999 she founded the organization and started the activities at her house. Then the first Domari Community Center was opened in 2005 in the Old City of Jerusalem and later moved to its current location at Shu'afat in East Jerusalem.

The center is a warm and welcoming place and offers the members of the Dom community a secure space to gather and receive practical support and educational resources. The center provides afterschool tutoring program for Dom children, vocational courses for Dom women, literacy courses, humanitarian aid, and programs that foster cultural pride.

For further information you can have a look at our homepage: www.domarisociety.com

Range of Focus in 2019

This year in 2019 we focused our activities on following three aspects:

- Education for Dom children
- Letting people know about Domari
- Preserving the Domari culture

In order to impact these areas of focus we offered a range of different activities that will be highlighted in this report.

Cooperation/Membership

We consider cooperation as a necessary tool for development processes. Therefore, we maintain partnerships with different stakeholders, being aware of the importance of each pillar: local communities, authorities, other organizations and individuals at a national and international level.

The following organizations:

- Vrienden van Domari, the Netherlands
- The Dom Research Center, the US
- Global Aid Network, International
- Kinderpostzegels, the Netherlands
- British Shalom Salaam Trust, UK
- Planeterra, Canada
- Mercy Fund Christ Church Jerusalem, Jerusalem
- Joseph Project
- Christian friend of Israel
- Bridges for peace

The Domari Center projects in 2019

After-school Tutoring Program for Dom children

Project duration: January 2019 – December 2019

Partners: Global Aid Network, Kinderpostzegels, British Shalom Salaam Trust, Mercy Fund Christ Church Jerusalem, Dom Research Center, Vrienden van Domari

Goal

- To raise the educational level of Dom children
- To increase the respect of their parents for their children's education
- To give the children a broader choice of future works

Objectives

- *To improve students' results*
We try to improve our students' results by offering lessons and assistance with homework or study for exams.
- *To Stop the children dropping out the school and encourage them to go into higher education.*
Dom children have an exceptionally high dropout rate due to the pressures of discrimination and poverty. We support their study so that they can do well at the school. Furthermore, we help them the study to enter the higher education.
- *To increase the involvement of the families in the education process*
The Domari family tend to think that helping the house work is more important for the children than their study. We hope to change the thinking. The family can have a significant impact on the child's desire to continue learning through this program. The involvement of the parents facilitates the cooperation between the center, the school and the families and allows us to do the best possible for the children's progress.
- *To raise the self-confidence of cultural identity*
The younger Dom generation has become less interested in the ancient traditions and culture of the Domari people, preferring rather to assimilate into the neighboring Arab communities. This self-imposed assimilation can be attributed to the discrimination and marginalization that the Dom people face. As a result, there are economic and social limitations that come from being identified and recognized as Dom. These limitations are both internally and externally imposed. We believe educating the younger generations will start to break down these limiting barriers.

Implemented activities

The center provided four lessons of Arabic, English, Hebrew and Mathematics every week on Sunday, Monday, and Wednesday. In this year, 17 children (9 girls, 8 boys, 6-16 years old) generally took part in the program. In addition we got 3 new children (1 boy and 2 girls, they are all 8 years old) starting to come to the center from September. The number of children is upper than usual now as we are adopting about 15 students in general but the

oldest 3 girls will finish studying in the center soon so it will be usual after a while. We had Muneera Joulani as a teacher in this year, but she finished her work in the center and we have two new teacher Jinan and Violet for 2020.

In addition, we open the rooms almost every day in the whole year of 2019 so that children come to do their homework, study for exams, ask teachers about their studies. We provided meals to both students and teachers, and covered the bus transportation fees. In addition, we provided the students with necessary school supplies at the beginning of the school year.

We had the Drum class for Dom children sequentially last year, getting a new teacher Xader Nemer from Dom community. The drum class finished in September for a moment but we will restart the lesson from April in 2020.

We had also art lesson with our new volunteer woman Heidi.

We provided meals to both students and teachers, and covered the bus transportation fees. In addition, we provided the students with necessary school supplies at the beginning of the school year.

Achievements

Children came to the center almost every day as last year. It's very good for them to make it daily routine in order to get good grades in their school. Especially they looked enjoying the drum and art lesson. Every day we heard the sounds of traditional drums that the children were practicing for the next lesson, and the children came to us to show their paintings. We enjoyed the children's performance of the Drum at birthday party for the Dom children in the center. The center became a part of their everyday life. They are able to feel safe and enjoy their life in the center.

All students also go to school almost every day. They have no big problem with their studies in school. We believe that our study support help them not to drop out the schools. Because if they get good grades in their school, they would have self-confidences and would not be discriminated from Palestinian students about their grades or studies.

3 students enter to high school from junior high school this year. It's very important for us as we had a lot of young Dom had not entered to high school and got easy job. We have to motivate them to keep studying to get better job, what they want to do in the future. It's important for whole Dom community too. It will make the social status of Dom people higher.





Welcoming visitors

Project duration: throughout the year

Goals

- To let people know about the Domari culture
- To share the culture and the problem to solve with Gypsies from other country

Objectives

- To talk about Domari history and culture to the guests

Visitors of this year

We got more than 80 visitors from International School in Israel, Israel, France, Denmark, Germany, Netherland, USA, UK, Japan, Canada, Turkey, Jordan in 2019.

Implemented activities

We ate lunch together, drunk coffee, talked about the Domari culture and explained the history of Domari. With the Gypsy guests, we talked about the Gypsy life of the country of each other. We made good friendships with them. For the non Gypsy guests, we explain the background of Domari and let them know the problem in Domari life.





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Domari Handicraft

Project duration: throughout the year

Partner: Sunbula

Goals

- Let people know about the Domari culture
- Preserve Domari culture
- Let Dom people have cultural pride and self-confidence



Objectives

- Let Dom women make Domari Handicraft and get income
- Participate in exhibitions and let people know about Domari

Implemented activities

We employed women Hana and Musa for making the handicraft sequentially last year. She made new pillows, leather mini bags, earrings. In addition, we participated in exhibitions two times in September and November. We cannot say that we sold a lot, but it's still very important to show people Domari culture.



Tourist project with Planeterra/G adventures

Partner: Planeterra/G adventures

Project duration: from December 2019

Goals

- Let more people in the world know us and our Domari culture
- improve Dom people's life
- Give Dom women opportunity to work and self-confidence

Objectives

- improve our tourism skill
- give more Dom women opportunities to work in this program
- get income outside of grants

Implemented activities

With the support of Planeterra, we started the tourism project from December 2019. We employ one more woman Zahra for handicraft and two women Xadra and Bahira for cooking. We serve the guests from all over the world Domari lunch and dessert with coffee or tea, make speech about Domari culture and Amoun's life story. We had optional feedback papers from visitors and all papers show positive feedback about the experiences in the center. What we want to improve is how to sell the handicraft. Although the visitors says the handicraft are beautiful, they seldom bought them. The book about Amoun's life story was selling the best through this project, but we finished the copies although some visitors asked us to send the book. We have to prepare the copies or publish a new book as soon as possible.



Humanitarian aid

Partner: Joseph Project/Vrienden van Domari/Bridges for peace/Christian friend of Israel
Project duration: Throughout the year

Objectives

- Support poor Dom people with necessary stuff
- Make Dom children happy as the same with the other children

Implemented activities

We provided poor Dom families necessary food packages Bridge for Peace and Vrienden van Domari, second hand clothes from Joseph project, and blankets from Vrienden van Domari. In addition, we provided children school supplies with the support of Vrienden van Domari in September and gifts from Joseph Project in the holiday season after the Ramadan and from Christian Friends of Israel in the Christmas.





Domari Language preservation project

Project duration: Throughout the year

Objectives

- Preserve the Domari culture.

Implemented activities

We invited Dom people especially elderly people who can talk Domari language, which is one of the endangered language, and record what they speak in the Domari. After that we asked one of the best speaker a lesson of the Domari language per week throughout the year 2019. The recording is conducted by a volunteer from Japan, Muna. We have tried to make an grammar book and a Domari textbook for children and we hope that we could publish these books next year.



Working with donors and partners

Our organization benefits greatly from the support of individual givers, partners and other foundations or organizations. They give their time, expertise and funding to ensure that we continue our work among the Domari community. Without the help of our committed donors and partners, we could not reach as many Dom people as we do.

We are thankful for all our donors and partners and hope to continue our relations in 2020. A relationship between donor and beneficiary must involve consistent communication and transparency. The Domari House commits to working with all of our donors in a trustworthy atmosphere. We believe that the values of integrity, intentionality and honesty are the best ways of developing a vision and working on the vision together.

Upcoming activities for 2020

- After school tutoring program (continuing)
- Hairdressing Course for Dom women
- Catering Course for Dom women
- Welcoming visitors (continuing)
- Domari handicraft (continuing)
- Humanitarian aid (continuing)
- Tourist program with Planeterra/Gadventures (continuing)
- Domari Language preservation project (continuing)

The Domari Team



Amoun Sleem

The director of the Domari Society



Xadra Sleem



Jannie & Kawthar



Muna & Amoun



Heidi



Muneera

Jannie Slik had volunteered for 2 years in the Domari Society and finished her work in the year 2019. We held the farewell party for her and spent nice time. We thank Jannie very much for her devoted work for the community and her cheerful character that always made atmosphere of the center happy.



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