

## Insights from a Transformational Classroom in Lebanon: Samia Habli

At Teach For All's Global Conference in Armenia in October 2019, we learned from an amazing educator named Samia Habli who works with children facing significant challenges in Lebanon. Here you can find some personal reflections from Samia and links to a series of videos captured in her classroom.

### Samia's Personal Reflections

It was my fifth year attending an all-girls public school when I decided that I had had enough. I was uninspired and frustrated with how my friends and I were treated. There had to be more to education than being yelled at, having our thoughts and opinions dismissed, and our dreams laughed at and mocked just because we were girls. Somehow, I got my hands on an application to an international school that brings together students from all over the world to foster leadership, peace, and sustainability. I applied to the United World Colleges, got a scholarship to attend the one in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and my path in life was drastically altered.

After high school, I attended Macalester College where I studied Biology and Geography and completed a concentration in Community and Global Health. But it was the informal part of my education at Macalester that was the most impactful in shaping who I am as a person today. For two years, I worked with the Department of Multicultural Life as a program assistant. My team and I were responsible for creating intentional spaces on campus for the Macalester community to engage in challenging conversations on social and political issues, such as environmental justice, mental health, gender and sports, and many others. I was able to explore the identities I carried within me and understand my place in society. More so, I was able to reconcile with parts of myself that I had hidden for very long.

At the end of my time at Macalester, I realized there was something I needed to do before graduate school. I had come a long way since public school in Lebanon, and I felt a sense of duty to do something with the opportunities and privilege I was given. I experienced first-hand how transformative and empowering quality education can be, and I wanted to do the same for other young people. That's how I decided to join Teach for Lebanon where I worked with Lebanese, Palestinian, and Syrian students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The planning and facilitation skills

To learn more about Samia's impact and work with Teach For Lebanon, watch these videos:

1. [Why we need to address the root causes of inequity and marginalization](#) (3 min)
2. [How structural bias affects refugee children in Lebanon](#) (3 min)
3. [Structural and cultural gender bias in Lebanon](#) (6 min)
4. [Our gender based violence project](#) (10 min)
5. [Our journey of healing](#) (10 min)
6. [Building agency with my students](#) (4 min)
7. [Making learning relevant to students identities and contexts through storytelling](#) (2 min)
8. [Exploring our relationship to community and culture with students](#) (4 min)

I had developed with the Department of Multicultural Life helped me design and implement a project that tackles Gender-based Violence with my students. The weekly sessions became a space for us to examine issues affecting our community, challenge the norms and ways of thinking we take for granted, practice openness and vulnerability, and grow together. I helped gather information and facilitate the conversations, but the content was mainly driven by my students' desire to discuss issues like girls' lack of freedom, xenophobia and racism in the community, body image and self-love, healthy relationships, domestic violence, and child marriage.

My experience with TFL has solidified my commitment to fight for girls' access to quality education and equal opportunities as well as women's sexual and reproductive rights. With the scholarship I received from TFL, I will be working towards a Master of Public Health degree at the American University of Beirut.