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Myriad · Alliance for Borderless Giving

# NEWS LETTER



**Changing the Course  
of Young Lives Around  
the World – Thanks to  
Canadian Donors**

Education is an important pillar of KBF CANADA's mission of building a better society. Thanks to the generous support of Canadian donors passionate about impacting young people's lives, KBF CANADA is providing students around the world the opportunity to pursue higher education. We are pleased to highlight a few of our key initiatives benefitting young scholars.

## SUPPORTING BRIGHT MINDS IN LEBANON

Since 2021, KBF CANADA has been working with LIFE, a worldwide membership organization for Lebanese professionals in the diaspora, to assist talented Lebanese students in financial need. Education is at the heart of the mission of LIFE, which attracts some of the best and brightest through its strong partnerships with select universities.

The chain of crises that has rocked Lebanon over the past few years has forced the organization to rethink its priorities. In addition to the trauma and loss caused by the 2020 Beirut explosion, the collapse of the Lebanese economy has caused widespread financial hardship. "We have been focusing on undergraduate students studying in Lebanon who are really struggling," said Lara Koro, who heads LIFE's Education Program. Up to 80 percent of their scholarship students are now based in Lebanon.

Thanks to The Rossy Foundation Fund at KBF CANADA, 49 students received funding to support their university studies in 2021 and 2022 and a new cohort of 46 students started in October 2023. This opportunity provides them not just with funding but with access to a network of global professionals who take students under their wing and connect them with knowledge and opportunities. "The impact is really the employability of our students," said Zeina Farhat, Managing Director of LIFE Generation, the organization's charity arm.

Students seek out the program for its many services and benefits that help equip them for the job market. Majd Fares, a scholarship student who recently graduated from the American University of Beirut with a degree in mechanical engineering, describes the scholarship program as "a hub for nurturing future leaders, offering numerous opportunities such as volunteering programs, internships, mentorship programs and a wide range of workshops."

This personalized support yields impressive results: within 6 months of graduation, 100% of the students who have finished their studies find employment opportunities. "We want to keep on working to deliver exactly the same impact," said Farhat. "This decision of shifting more resources to students in Lebanon was also to reverse the brain drain, to keep the talent we have."

By giving the students hope and encouraging them to achieve their dreams, the program creates a ripple effect that continues well after they begin their career. "The beauty of all of this is that once they start working, they want to help others, be it in financial terms or as a mentor, or even helping us with selection of the students," said Koro. "You want to give back to your community."

## A PHILANTHROPIST GOES BACK TO HIS ROOTS

Claude-Daniel Le Flem is a wonderful example of someone who gave back. He was 15 years old when he lost his mother, a beloved schoolteacher and public figure in Gembloux, Belgium, to cancer. Despite economic hardship, he completed his schooling in Gembloux and graduated from university before eventually emigrating to Canada, where he became a linguistics professor at the Université Laval in Quebec.

Several decades later and in diminishing health, Le Flem contacted his former secondary school, the Athénée Royale in Gembloux, with the intent of establishing a one million Canadian dollar scholarship fund. At first he was met with disbelief and even wariness towards this sudden generous offer from abroad. Then after verifying the offer, the school and regional authorities seemed overwhelmed by the process of establishing a foundation to administer the scholarships. Disappointed by the lack of action and in a race against time, Le Flem contacted the Belgian national broadcaster RTBF to share his story. "This is the twilight of my life," he despairingly told reporters, concerned that time was running out for him to ever see his vision come to fruition.

Fortunately, KBF CANADA caught wind of this story and reached out to Le Flem to make his dream a reality. Within weeks, the Legacy Fund was established at KBF CANADA to honor his mother and to give those students at his former school with great potential but limited financial resources the opportunity to pursue higher education. The fund was inaugurated in May 2018 with the planting of a Canadian maple tree in the schoolyard of the Athénée, a deeply moving event for Le Flem who was battling terminal illness. He passed away just six months later.

The fund's first annual award of 10,000 euros was granted to the scholarship's first recipient, Nicolas Grégoire, in 2020 along with personal guidance and support. With support of the fund established by Le Flem, he has completed his bachelor's degree in information technology and



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**If I could, I would tell him how much this helped me”**

- Nicolas Grégoire

is now pursuing his master's while serving as a reservist in the Belgian military. The first in his family to pursue higher education, Grégoire is now on the jury to select future scholarship recipients. "If I could, I would tell him how much this helped me," he said of Le Flem. "I am really grateful to him, it means a lot to me."



# NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR GIRLS IN RURAL MOROCCO

Thanks to a Canadian donor, KBF CANADA also provides some of the most brilliant and motivated female pupils in the northern Moroccan village of Sidi Redouane with the opportunity to study at university.

High dropout rates, especially among girls, are pervasive in rural Morocco. "The problems are the same in rural areas all around Morocco," explained Rim Zouhry, project manager at the Moroccan non-profit Fondation Sanady. "Generally parents want girls to marry at an early age. Some schools don't have basic facilities such as toilets. There are long distances to travel to school, and the roads are not safe. There is also the problem of academic failure, a serious problem in the quality of education."

Many of the young women who surmount these obstacles to pursuing an education are prevented by financial hardship from continuing their studies after secondary school. Radia Benkhouya, a Canadian citizen who has close ties to Sidi Redouane, collaborated with KBF CANADA to initiate the university scholarships for students graduating from the village's high school. Jointly implemented with Fondation Sanady, a local non-profit organization, the scholarships support six young women who are

living and studying in two Moroccan cities. They were selected based on their exemplary academic records, their pressing financial need and their determination to study and pursue their chosen professions. "They are so persevering and hardworking, it's incredible," Benkhouya said of the young students.

The scholarships not only bring unprecedented opportunities to the beneficiaries; they promise to positively impact their broader community.



**I am extremely grateful to be so generously supported financially and morally”**

- Chahida El Moudi

"This is going to completely change the course of their lives, and more than that, they will be in a strong position to help their families and be an inspiration for other girls," said Benkhouya.

Leaving their village to start new lives as university students has presented the women with new challenges, but all have now successfully entered their second year of study. "I am extremely grateful to be so generously supported financially and morally," said eighteen year old Chahida El Moudi, who is pursuing a degree in nursing. "A year after leaving the village of Sidi Redouane, I have become more responsible, autonomous and ambitious. I want to be a good person and help others like you helped me. I am now aware of the value of community."