

## SURA ARTS ACADEMY PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT

*SURA (Students Understanding and Relating to Art) Arts Academy* is a pioneering initiative initiated by the Arab American National Museum (AANM) and led in Jordan by Princess Basma Youth Resource Center's (PBYRC). It equipped 46 young people between the ages of 11-15 years with the basic instructions of the art of photography and opened a creative channel for them to reflect their communities and their understanding of issues of identity, diversity, culture, democracy and team building. This initiative which started in March 2007 concluded in January 2008 after 10 months of regular weekly meetings and frequent study tours.

SURA Arts Academy's main goals were:

- Provide long-term quality art classes for 45-50 youth in low-income neighbourhoods of Amman
- Instil a sense of community pride and a better understanding of citizenship by allowing the participants experience and see their community/country from a different perspective
- Equip the participants with the basic interpersonal skills to enable them better interact with their community.
- Create a platform for the youth to express their opinions using creative methods.
- Provide young people with the opportunities to consider future careers in the arts, including photography.

### **PRINCIPLES OF EVALUATION AND DESIGN:**

The evaluation of SURA Arts Academy incorporated both quantitative and qualitative methods and mainly aimed to assess whether the project attained its objectives and how did it impact the young people, the various stakeholders and the community in general. Few lessons learned evolved through the process and are highlighted in this report.

The evaluation was based on the active participation of all the various stakeholders including the participants, facilitators, photographers, organizers, and the parents. The different evaluation tools were developed in consultation with the organizers and were tailored to meet the intended expectations within the given time-frame. For each stakeholder, a different tool was used:

- Surveys with the young participants and their parents
- Semi structured one-to-one interviews with the photographers, staff and volunteers
- Photography that reflects change with the participants

These tools sought to retrieve the various stakeholders' feedback on the:

- **Content:** Was the content of the program relevant to the youth and their community?
- **Process:** How well was the program implemented? What went well and what challenges were encountered?
- **Impact:** Has the program achieved its anticipated objectives and how did it influence the various stakeholders and on what levels?

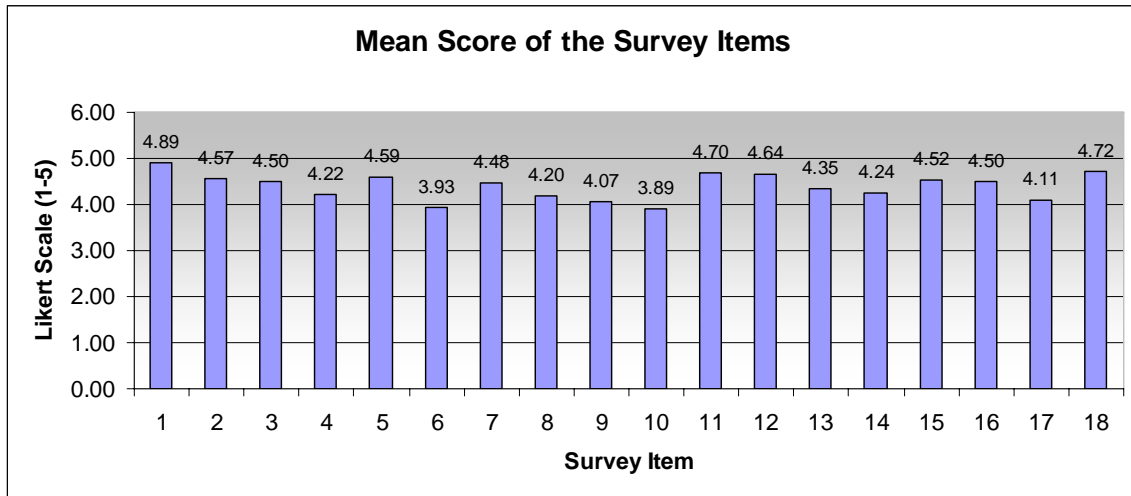
### Results Overview:

**Content:** SURA Arts Academy provided an innovative platform for the youth living in marginal areas to experience their community and see it from a different perspective. It enabled them express their views using the creative art of photography. PBYRC staff developed their model of SURA Arts Academy after visiting the AANM and got exposed to the US experience. They incorporated their observations into developing a model that adheres to the Jordanian culture and identified themes in compliance with it (my neighbourhood, ethnicity, professions, food, religions, hobbies, history, family...). Staff, volunteers and photographers actively engaged the young participants in practical photography sessions, small group discussions, field trips, and inspired them to interact with their community and identify positive role models.

**Implementation:** The project was implemented successfully. The staff managed to overcome few challenges such as the change of staff members, coordination issues and language barriers. However, the overall performance was exceptional as can be noted in the next section.

**Impact:** As stated before, different tools were used to assess the impact of SURA Arts Academy on those who participated in the process. A survey was developed and distributed on the participants with 18 items asking them to rate the project on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being the lowest on the scale (responding to strongly disagree) and 5 being the highest (responding to strongly agree). And since the project team had the 46 participants divided into 3 age groups, the survey was colour-coded to compare the results of each group with the other.

The mean for each of the 18 survey items reveals that respondents rated the program highly since the mean ranged between 3.89 and 4.89. The highest rating (4.89) was given to item no.1 (*In general, SURA Arts Academy was a unique, interesting and a useful project*) and the lowest (3.89) was given to item no. 10 (*The group discussions challenged my understanding of citizenship; I have more tolerance now towards diversity in my community and more acceptances to my culture, norms and traditions*).

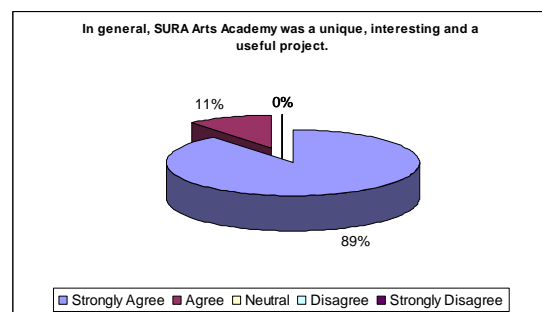
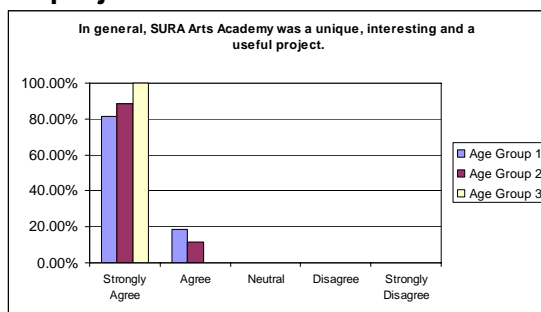


Semi structured interviews were conducted with photographers, volunteers and organizers to seek their feedback on the process and identify the strengths of the project, the challenges they have encountered and their recommendations on how to move forward. Another simple open ended survey questions were developed and distributed on a random sample of the participants' parents to get their feedback on the process. All the results of these tools were compiled and are reported below.

## I. PARTICIPANTS:

### Likert Scale Item<sup>1</sup>s:

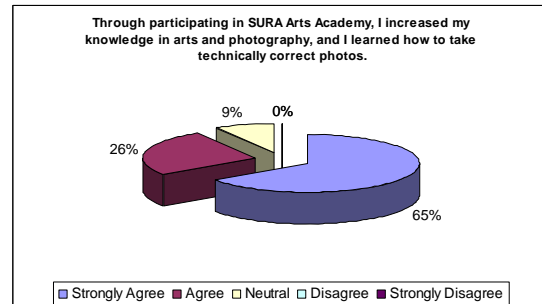
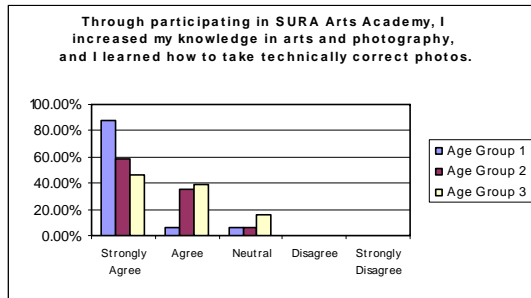
#### 1. In general, SURA Arts Academy was a unique, interesting and a useful project.



This item gives a general indication about how the participants perceive the project. The vast majority of the participants strongly agreed (89%) and agreed (11%) with that statement; they have both benefited and enjoyed their journey with SURA Arts Academy. As can be noted, the youngest group of participants (age group 3) strongly identified themselves with the statement (100%).

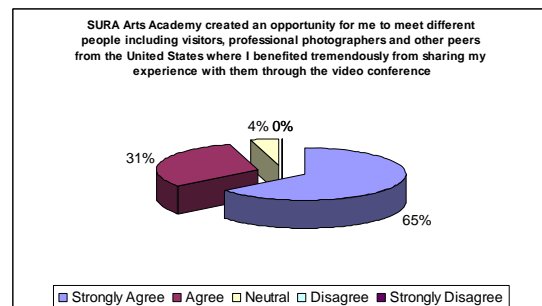
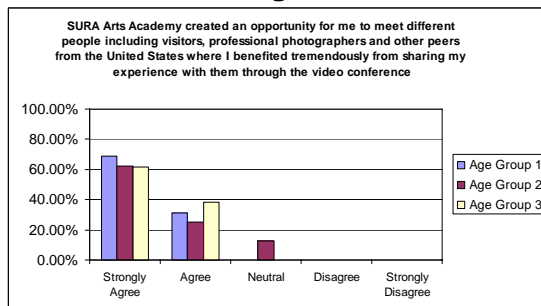
<sup>1</sup> Age Group 1 responds to participants aged 15 years and above, Age Group 2 responds to participants aged 13 and 14 years, and Age Group 1 responds to participants aged 11 and 12 years

**2. Through participating in SURA Arts Academy, I increased my knowledge in arts and photography, and I learned how to take technically correct photos.**



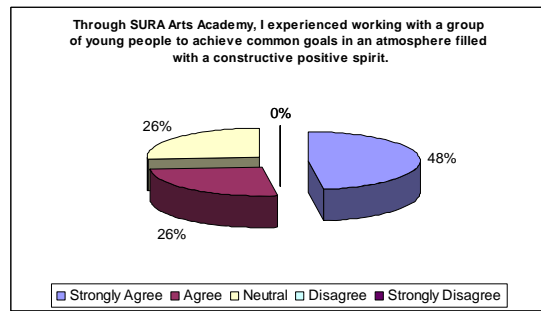
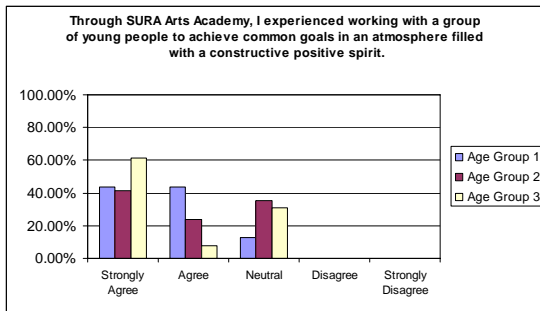
This item aims to measure the technical knowledge which the young participants have developed during the process and to what extent their understanding and appreciation of art has developed. 65% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement, 26% agreed and 9% were neutral. As shown in the bar chart, the older respondents had a higher percentage (87.5%) of 'strongly agree' compared to the youngest group (46.15%). This might indicate that the older the participants were, the more accomplished their knowledge of photography becomes.

**3. SURA Arts Academy created an opportunity for me to meet different people including visitors, professional photographers and other peers from the United States where I benefited tremendously from sharing my experience with them through the video conference**



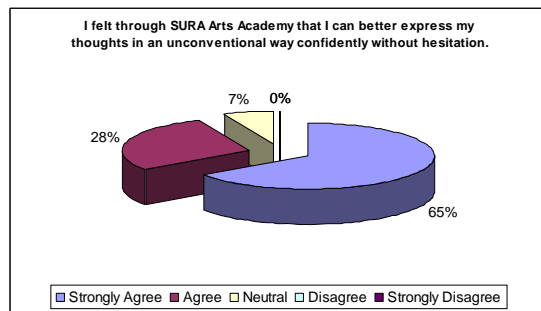
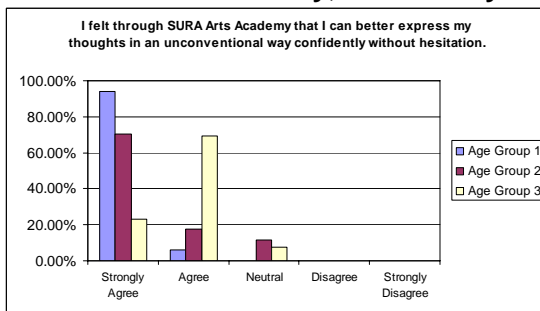
A total of 96% of the respondents strongly agreed (65%) and agreed (31%) with that statement. This implies that the program was effective in expanding the horizons of the young participants and opened channels for them to interact with a diverse group of people at different levels of professionalism and from various backgrounds. Furthermore, the project succeeded in recruiting a group of photographers who left a positive impact in being inspiring role models and mentors to the participants.

**4. Through SURA Arts Academy, I experienced working with a group of young people to achieve common goals in an atmosphere filled with a constructive positive spirit.**



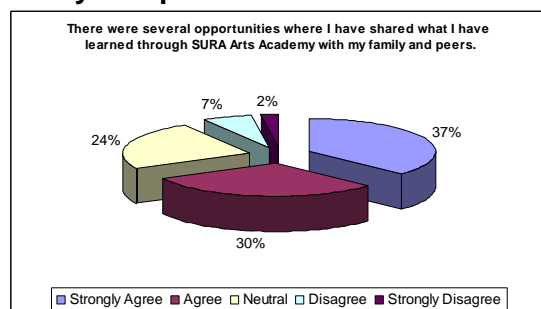
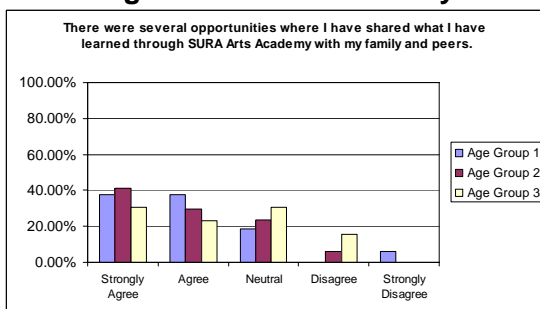
48% of the respondents strongly agreed and 26% agreed with the statement while one quarter (26%) were neutral (This might be attributed to the fact that the participants mainly come from middle-to-low income and conservative areas and thus few of them preferred working in a non-mixed atmosphere (please refer to the comments section)). This is an important indicator which suggests that SURA succeeded in attaining the goal of helping the young people develop a sense of community and cultivated a teamwork spirit among them.

### 5. I felt through SURA Arts Academy that I can better express my thoughts in an unconventional way, confidently and without hesitation.



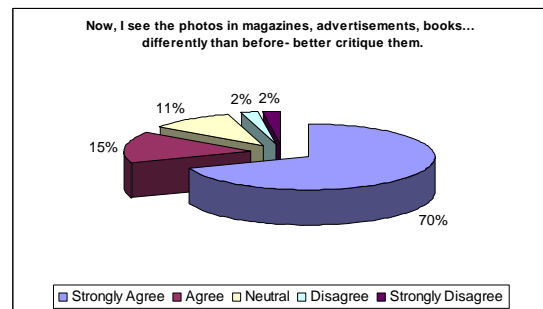
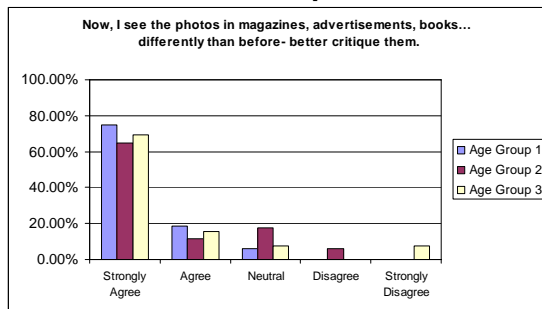
This item shows how confident the participants have become in expressing their own ideas and opinions. Only 7% were neutral while the vast majority 65% and 28% strongly agreed and agreed that SURA boosted their confidence and equipped them with creative skills to communicate their thoughts. This is a critical goal which the project aspired to achieve and thus succeeded to attain.

### 6. There were several opportunities where I have shared what I have learned through SURA Arts Academy with my family and peers.



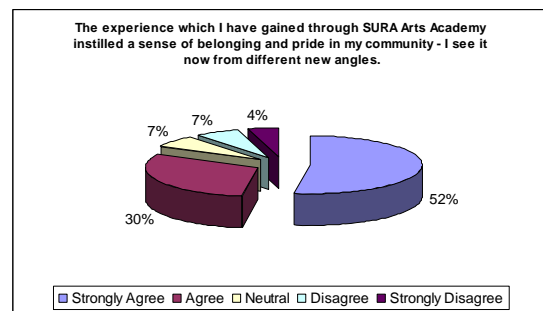
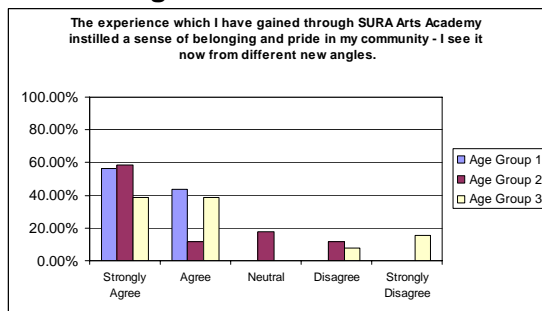
This item indicates to what extent the participants impacted their surroundings through sharing the knowledge which they have acquired through SURA with their community. 37% of them strongly agreed, 30% agreed, 24% were neutral, 7% disagreed and only 2% strongly disagreed. These diverse reactions might be due to various reasons among which is the unavailability of occasions to share such knowledge and/or the intergenerational gap which often the youth face in their communication with their parents.

**7. Now, I see the photos in magazines, advertisements, books... differently than before- better critique them.**



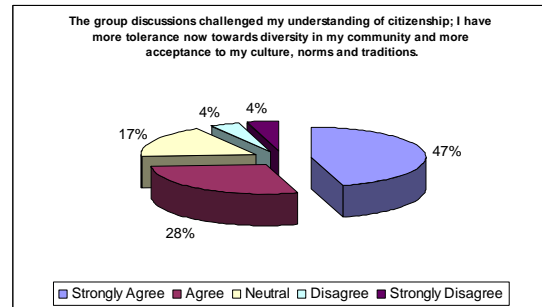
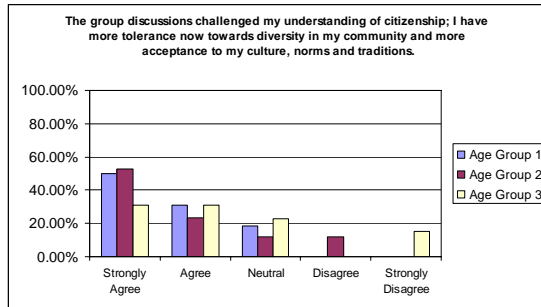
SURA Arts Academy's goals included creating a youth generation that is well informed, appreciates good art and critiques the mainstream media constructively. 70% of the respondents strongly believe that the way they perceive photographs now has changed and became more technically mature. Only a total of 4% strongly disagreed (2%) or disagreed (2%) with that statement.

**8. The experience which I have gained through SURA Arts Academy instilled a sense of belonging and pride in my community - I see it now from different new angles.**



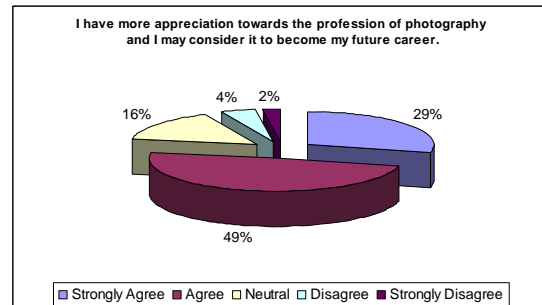
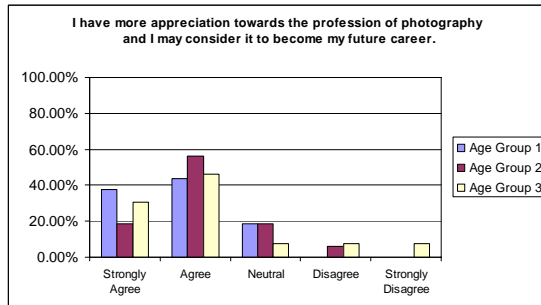
Half of the participants (52%) strongly agreed and 30% of them agree that SURA Arts Academy instilled a sense of pride in their community, while 7% were neutral, 7% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed with that. This indicates the positive impact of SURA in cultivating a positive perception among the youth towards their community, their culture and their identity. However, as can be noted from the bar chart, the youngest group seemed to less assertive towards this item unlike the older groups.

**9. The group discussions challenged my understanding of citizenship; I have more tolerance now towards diversity in my community and more acceptances to my culture, norms and traditions.**



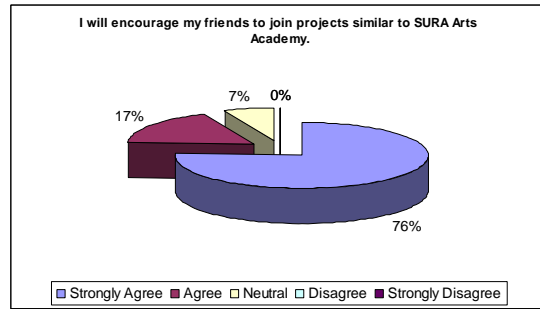
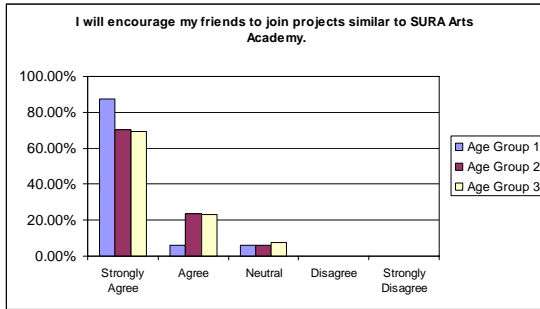
SURA Arts Academy aimed to positively influence the youth's understanding of citizenship issues as well as promoting tolerance towards diversities. The participants' feedback suggests that 47% of them strongly agreed, 28% agreed, 17% were neutral, 4% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed that SURA achieved this goal. Referring to the bar chart, none of the oldest group members disagreed with that statement while 15.38% of the youngest group strongly disagreed with it. This suggests that the staff and the photographers might have needed to give more attention and further elaboration on such topics especially with the youngest group.

**10. I have more appreciation towards the profession of photography and I may consider it to become my future career.**



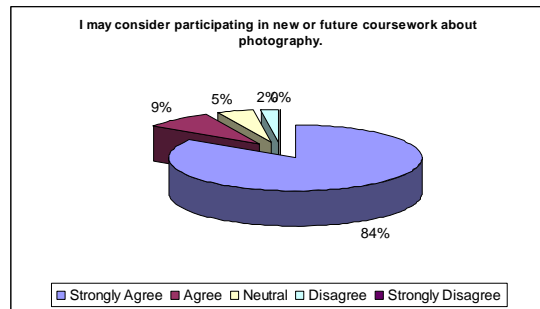
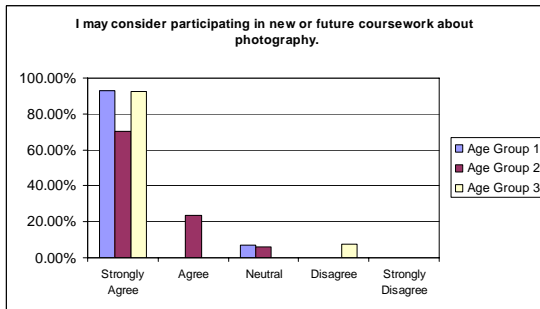
29% of the respondents strongly agreed, 49% agreed, 16% were neutral, 4% disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed with that statement. There is relatively a high percentage of those who have developed a genuine interest in photography and may consider it as a future profession. This is a cutting edge realization as it challenges the stereotypical professions dominating in Jordan such as engineering, medicine, law...

### 11. I will encourage my friends to join projects similar to SURA Arts Academy.



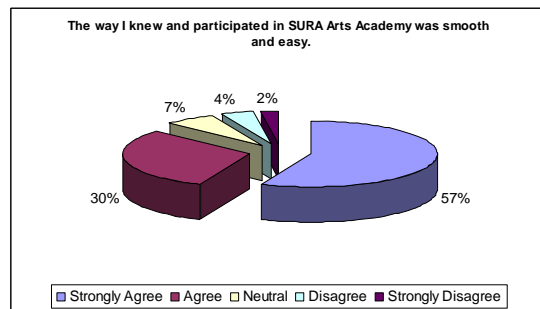
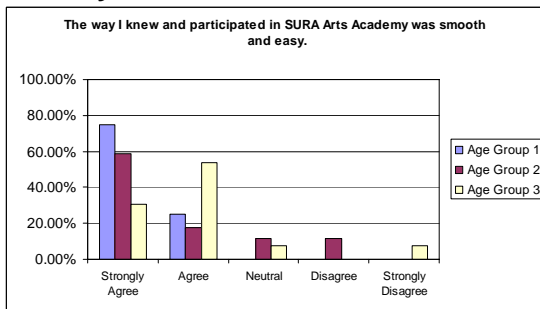
This item indicates to what extent have the respondents reached out to their community to invite them join similar opportunities. 76% of them strongly agreed and 17% agreed while only 7% were neutral. This illustrates the level of passion that grew within the participants to share such a rewarding experience with their community and encourage them to part-take a role in similar activities.

### 12. I may consider participating in new or future coursework about photography.



The vast majority of the participants stated that they strongly agree (84%) and agree (9%) with that statement. This relatively high percentage in addition to the participants' remarks in the following questions urges PBYRC to continue in the program and integrate creative arts such as photography in their planning. Only 5% were neutral and 2% disagreed with it.

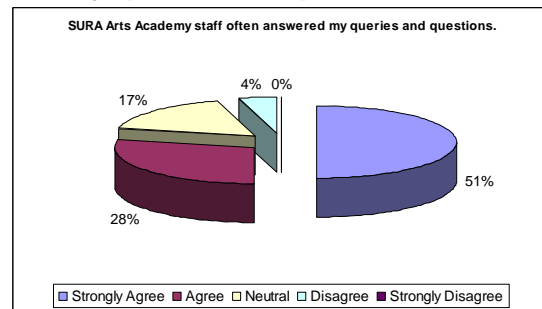
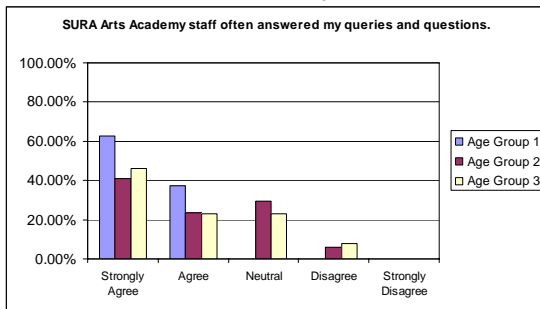
### 13. The way I knew and participated in SURA Arts Academy was smooth and easy.



57% and 30% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the statement. The 7% who were neutral, the 4% who disagreed and the 2% who strongly disagreed mostly responded to the younger age groups (2 and 3).

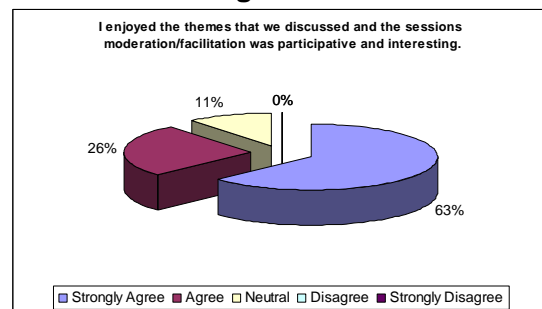
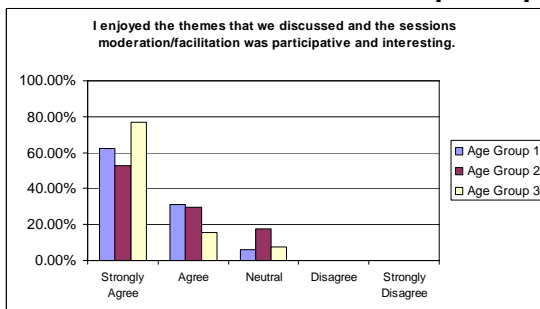


#### 14. SURA Arts Academy staff often answered my queries and questions.



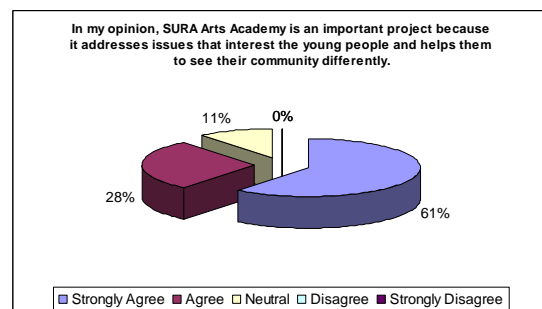
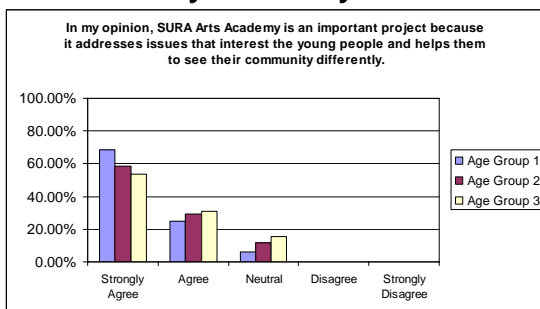
An approximate of 4 out of 5 participants either strongly agreed (51%) or agreed (28%) that SURA Arts Academy staff was helpful and quickly responded to the participants inquiries. Only 17% were neutral and 4% disagreed – they are mostly from the younger age categories (group 2 and 3).

#### 15. I enjoyed the themes that we discussed and the sessions' moderation/facilitation was participative and interesting.



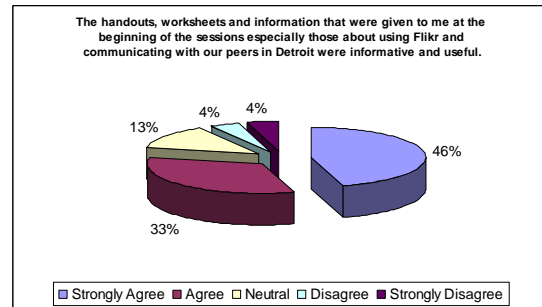
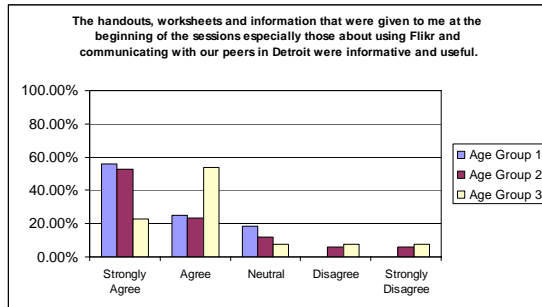
None of the participants disagreed with that statement; while only 1 in 10 were neutral. The vast majority either strongly agreed (63%) or agreed (26%) that the sessions were entertaining as well as informative. The bar chart suggests that the youngest age group was the one that mostly enjoyed the sessions where the percentage of those who strongly agreed with the statement reached 77%.

#### 16. In my opinion, SURA Arts Academy is an important project because it addresses issues that interest the young people and helps them to see their community differently.



Only 1 in 10 respondents does not know whether SURA addressed the areas/issues that concern the young people in their community while 89% of them believe that SURA succeeded in tackling those issues that interested them and enabled them see their communities differently. This item strongly highlights that SURA succeeded in attaining its aspired goals.

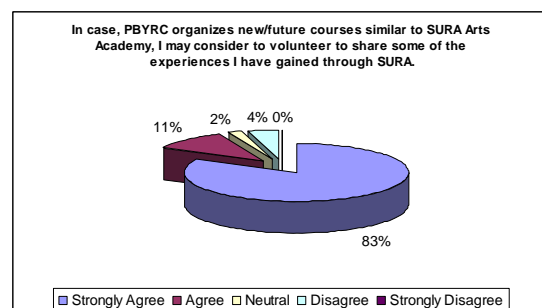
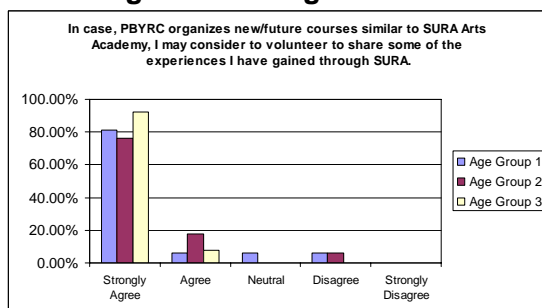
**17. The handouts, worksheets and information that were given to me at the beginning of the sessions especially those about using Flickr and communicating with our peers in Detroit were informative and useful.**



46% of the respondents strongly agreed, 33% agreed, 13% were neutral, 4% disagreed and another 4% strongly disagreed with the statement. This item indicates that the participants benefited from the information provided by the staff as well as enjoyed interacting with their peers in the USA. Yet, some encountered few obstacles due to the language barrier and unease to use technology as a means of communication.

*Items 13, 14, 15 and 17 obtained the participants feedback on the process and the way in which the project was implemented. The relatively high percentage of those who strongly agreed or agreed with the statements emphasises that PBYRC have chosen the most appropriate tools to promote the project and facilitating the overall process. The responsiveness and the availability of the staff highly contributed to succeeding the project.*

**18. In case, PBYRC organizes new/future courses similar to SURA Arts Academy, I may consider volunteering to share some of the experiences I have gained through SURA.**



Only 1 in 20 respondents will be hesitant to share his/her experience with others in other projects PBYRC may organize, while 83% of the respondents strongly agreed and 11% agreed that they would not mind volunteering in future activities. The

youngest group unlike what is anticipated are the most excited to do so as 92% strongly agreed and 8% agreed with that statement. This high sense of commitment feeds into the success of SURA Arts Academy in getting the participants' ownership to the process.

*As for the participants' feedback on the open ended questions, following is a summary of their responses:*

**If you were to change something in SURA Arts Academy program; what would it be and why?**

1. Increase the sessions duration time
2. Change the timing of the sessions
3. Develop a curriculum for photography and study it accordingly
4. Take the cameras since the majority of the participants wants to practice in their spare time
5. Many participants would have preferred if they kept the battery-charger throughout the week as well as the USB camera connection.
6. Increase the number of field trips and study tours (especially visit ruins and historical sites).
7. Assign photography missions/ group homework to each group on weekly basis to keep them engaged in the process and encourage peer learning
8. Develop some of the participants' photographs that they may keep them
9. Start some sort of an incentive rewarding scheme
10. More interactive sessions with their friends in the US
11. Few mentioned that they would not change a thing in SURA as it was such an exciting, useful and vibrant program!
12. *Two preferred separating the male and female participants.*
13. One participant complained from the transportation as s/he faced hardships into getting to the weekly sessions
14. One preferred having one large group rather than 3 sub-groups to enrich the group discussions
15. Another complained of the toughness of the sessions' ground-rules

**Share an incident or a story that you will never forget during your journey with SURA Arts Academy...**

1. Many participants shared that there were many unforgettable incidents that occurred to them during their visits to Jerash, Ajloun, Petra and the Children's Museum.
2. Most of the participants in the older age group stated that participating in a national competition 'Amman in a Picture' and winning the first places is something remarkable they will never forget.
3. A couple of participants stated that they enjoyed certain themes such as their families and people at work.
4. Some of the incidents that were mentioned by the participants reveal how their skills in interacting with their community have developed;
  - "I encouraged my friends and relatives to join SURA but unfortunately when they asked PBYRC, their applications were turned down as there were no places left."
  - "My best solitude time was when I used to go downtown to shoot pictures... It was hard at the beginning, it felt awkward, but now things have changed!"

5. A group of the participants stated that the experience they have gained through SURA made them appreciate photography more and the skills which they have acquired through SURA have enabled them to take quality photos that are technically correct 'by the rules'.
6. Some participants have developed friendships and enjoyed their experience of dealing with their peers in the USA.

#### Comments:

All the participants' remarks revolved around one or more of the following:

- Have a joint group trip to celebrate their achievement.
- Keep the cameras that they may continue the journey which they have started with SURA.
- Develop SURA Arts Academy Professional program for those interested in further developing their skills in photography.
- Share their experiences with others and tutoring other participants in the future.

**Another evaluation exercise was given to the participants to:**

- **Identify the themes they liked most during their journey with SURA Arts Academy**
- **Illustrate how SURA impacted them through using photography.**

Following is a summary of their responses:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ People at work (10)</li> <li>▪ Nature (8)</li> <li>▪ My Family/History (5)</li> <li>▪ Religions (3)</li> <li>▪ Hobbies (2)</li> <li>▪ All Themes (2)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Historical Sites and Ruins (1)</li> <li>▪ Transportation (1)</li> <li>▪ Eid and Ramadan (1)</li> <li>▪ My Neighbourhood (1)</li> <li>▪ Food (1)</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

As for the photos that the participants have selected to illustrate the impact, many participants posted photos of natural sceneries, flowers, close-ups, friends and family members... Following are some selected photos with their captions:



"I only can say that SURA was like a staircase that moved me from down under to up high."

HUSSAM, 16 YEARS



"I've gained new friends like my best friend 'Amer'."  
 Abdullah, 12 years



"I've never imagined myself walking in the streets searching for photo to capture in the lens of my camera... SURA to me was like a lighted candle that lit my blown-off candle!"  
 Hind, 16 years

"SURA was like a dream to me that has changed my perception towards things and took me far away to a new world full of wonderful pictures; where I can easily express myself in my own way.."  
 Nuha, 15 years



"I've taken a photo for someone with a small animal to tell people not to hurt animals."  
 Mohammed, 15 years

## Other Stakeholders Feedback:

There were different stakeholders, who contributed to the success of SURA Arts Academy including the staff members, photographers, volunteers and parents. The following section summarizes their feedback and the evaluation tools which were used to obtain their impressions and critique for SURA.

### **Staff and Photographers:**

#### *Evaluation Tool:*

The same evaluation tool was used with both the staff members and photographers to allow maximum detailed feedback on the process, content and impact. Hence, a semi-structured one to one interview was conducted with 2 of the 3 photographers (the 3<sup>rd</sup> replied via email) and 2 staff members (among which one did not continue the process).

## II. PHOTOGRAPHERS:

### *Overall Feedback:*

#### Motivation:

Each of the photographers had a different motivation to join SURA Arts Academy. Photography has been one of the photographers' persistent passion and thus s/he is determined to seize any opportunity to promote its importance and philosophy. Another photographer joined SURA Arts Academy because s/he was intrigued by the idea of teaching children to how visually express themselves using a basic camera and reaching high levels of professionalism using simple techniques. The third photographer started with the intention of benefiting from his/her spare time to generate some income but soon that intention developed into a personal driven commitment after sensing the young people's desire and energy and the staff's support; s/he commented:

*"The fact that 3-4 young people have decided to pursue photography as a career drives me to continue..."*

#### Process and Content:

The photographers believe that from day one until the end of SURA Arts Academy, the process was very organized, timely and very well executed. In regard to the objectives, one of them felt that at the beginning there was some sort of ambiguity but as the project proceeded, things started to fall in place the became clearer.

The process of coaching the participants was flexible; the photographers had the space to easily deviate from the objectives and touch upon different yet vital subjects and techniques. However, only one aspect of photography was covered; i.e. documentary photography. The science of photography was not core in the process and the focus was heavily based on the practical experience rather than on the theory. One photographer towards the end of the sessions covered with the young participants the history of photography and they, 'unexpectedly' showed a high interest in the theoretical aspect as much as that they had shown before towards the practical one.

The content of SURA Arts Academy was an eye opener to the participants since it covered a wide spectrum of themes, methods and basic techniques of photography.

Yet the themes focused more on the social and humanitarian relationships of the young people with their community. The themes were selected by PBYRC staff while the techniques were left to the photographers to cover. The photographers' sole comment on the content was that they would have preferred changing the sequence of the themes.

PBYRC staff, especially Ms. Suha Syouf, played an exceptional role in motivating and supporting the photographers and thus she was highly appreciated for that.

#### Impact:

For the photographers; SURA Arts Academy was a rewarding and productive learning experience to them as much it was for the young participants. It was the very first time for many of them to instruct that young age group and they felt so proud of what they had achieved with them. One commented that the youth enthusiasm motivated him/her to keep researching and improving his/her performance while another stated that s/he has learned from the participants and mentors as much as they have learned from him/her.

As for the young participants, the photographers believe that the young participants have developed not only technically but have become more confident, mature and sociable. Every young participant is now capable of expressing him/herself using his/her own philosophy reflected in the photographs s/he takes. They have broken the ice between them and their community (family, friends, school...).

The photographers believe that SURA Arts Academy has introduced to Jordan a new generation that is more aware and experienced in photography; a generation that is more mature and independent from all those social norms that defines and limits rather than triggers creativity and innovation.

#### *In their own words...*

*"Each one of the participants left an impression that I will never forget..."*

*I will never forget the email I received from one of the participants after the workshop concluded; s/he wrote: "Our photos and stencil are now our own kingdoms that very few people will comprehend!"*

*Hanan*

*"Any photograph I see regardless of its quality enriches me... My favourite moments were watching the responses of the young participants whenever they saw their pictures on the screen!"*

*Linda*

*"The entire project is a beautiful and is an unforgettable experience; I feel honoured to have taught the participants and I would like to continue on if PBYRC decides to carry on with SURA Arts Academy."*

*Ali*

### III. STAFF:

#### *Overall Feedback:*

#### Process and Content:

PBYRC staff believes that SURA Arts Academy can be described as a *small but a sweet* project; it exceeded all the expectations and anticipated deliverables, it resonated well among all the different stakeholders and overcame many of the obstacles that evolved along the process (i.e. the drop out of participants and staff members).

The staff after getting an orientation about the process in the USA developed their own version of the program to adapt it to the Jordanian culture and make it relevant to Jordanian youth. At the core of the themes they had identified was the social dimension which portrays people in different settings and describes their interaction with nature, community, and the cultural norms. Along the process of implementation, the staff accommodated other themes such as the parliament elections and the national ceremonies/holidays based on the AANM request. On the other hand, it was left to the photographers' creativity to conduct the sessions and introduce the relevant techniques to cover such themes and topics.

The staff reached out to the young people living in the PBYRC's neighbourhood and other nearby areas such as Tabarbor, Al Nuzha, and Abu Nsair; they also visited various schools and Mabarrat Um El Hussain (orphanage) to select the participants. They also involved some of the active and talented youth enrolled in their Intel Club. To build a trust relationship with the participants' families, they had selected the brothers and sisters which resonated well with the families. In total, they selected 50 young people out of which 46 were committed throughout the process.

The process was youth friendly and participative; the youth played a significant role in selecting the photos that were uploaded on Flickr as well as the photos for the exhibition in consultation with the photographers. The participants also were available during the exhibition to welcome the guests and share their experiences with them.

#### Impact:

PBYRC Staff believe that all those who have contributed to SURA Arts Academy have been positively influenced throughout the process. In regard to the:

#### ▪ *Photographers:*

SURA Arts Academy has challenged the photographers' attitudes towards working with young people; as it had allowed them experience something which they may not have had before in interacting with their youthful perspective, enthusiasm and passion. They have also developed participative skills which moved them from being flat lecturers to lively facilitators. It also enabled them to envision something new for their career paths.

#### ▪ *Participants:*

In addition to what the photographers commented in the previous section, PBYRC staff believes that SURA Arts Academy has influenced the participants as it had allowed them:

- Develop a sense commitment and become more responsible as they had to care for their cameras throughout the week and respect the time of the sessions.



- Better know their country through the various visits PBYRC had arranged.
  - Improve their English through their interaction with the photographers and their USA peers as well as it improved their computer skills through learning to use new software programs such as Flickr and Photoshop.
  - Develop a long term strategy to market their work as some have already started their own accounts on Flickr to promote their work.
- *PBYRC Staff:*  
SURA Arts Academy benefited the staff at both:
- *The individual level:* they have developed into becoming skilfully multi-task oriented as well as it has fuelled their passion into continuing their work with the youth. Although the sessions were conducted on their weekends, the young participants' enthusiasm and interaction motivated them to continue.
  - *The organizational level:* photography became embedded in PBYRC other programs where some staff members have taken a specialized training to document their field work. Furthermore, SURA has contributed to promoting PBYRC within the community as it had reached out to work with its youth and built trust relationships with the parents residing there. It also got recognition through those members who won the national photography competition 'Amman in a Picture'.

### An Inspiring Moment...

"I will never forget the voices of those who won in 'Amman in a Picture' competition on the phone... They were full of excitement, passion and pride in what they have achieved!"  
Suha

### **Strengths, Obstacles and Recommendations:**

The following table summarises the main strengths identified in SURA Arts Academy, the challenges in the process of its implementation as well as the recommendations which both the photographers and staff members have suggested:

Advantage	Challenges	Recommendations
<p><i>Project Concept:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is the first of its kind in the Arab region; its concept is creative and pioneering in targeting a young age groups and integrating the creative arts in the development work and reaching out to marginal communities.</li> <li>A very effective tool that enables the young people to express themselves and acquire interpersonal skills.</li> <li>The project's proximity to the community</li> </ul> <p><i>Stakeholders:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The commitment of the staff and photographers to the process and the participants' curiosity and motivation to learn has pushed everyone to excel at every theme, subject and method.</li> </ul> <p><i>Process:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The great organization and spirit of PBYRC's staff and the mentors.</li> <li>The trips that the participants took helped them understand field photography very well.</li> <li>The friendly approach in dealing with the young participants.</li> </ul> <p><i>Impact:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The staff and the community became more convinced and aware about the importance of photography.</li> <li>The participants' development and maturity along the process (anyone can notice the difference before and after SURA)</li> </ul>	<p><i>Resources and Equipment:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some photographers stated that the lack of resources and equipment, and the very basic features of the cameras (not professional) limited them from covering various topics and techniques in photography.</li> </ul> <p><i>Target Group:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The workshop was limited to a specific community and the participants only represented a small segment of the Jordanian society.</li> <li>Some challenges were faced in dealing with the youngest age category and some participants were unresponsive at the beginning of the sessions.</li> </ul> <p><i>Process:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The timing of the training demanded the staff to work on their weekends as well as some photographers were unable to commit at the last sessions due to the change of time.</li> <li>For some, the projects' objectives of the project only became clear through the implementation of the project</li> <li>The limited number of field trips and photographers.</li> <li>The English language was barrier for the majority of the participants especially in communicating with their peers in the US and using the software programs.</li> <li>Difficulties in coordination with US due to the time difference.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Content:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To change the sequence of the themes</li> <li>To include more of the science of photography rather than just focusing on the practical aspect.</li> <li>To develop an original plan or model for SURA rather than depend heavily on the USA model/experience.</li> </ul> <p><i>Target Group:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To include both a younger age category (6-10 years) and an older one (17-19 years).</li> <li>Reach out to a wider segment of the community and engage both the east and west Ammanis (residents of Amman).</li> </ul> <p><i>Continuity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To develop a plan to start SURA Arts Academy II (a new group) or SURA Professional (to follow up with the graduates and focus more on the professional aspects of photography) &amp; start a photography club.</li> </ul> <p><i>Equipment:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide the participants with a professional and more powerful camera so they may further extend their knowledge of photography.</li> </ul> <p><i>Others:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To develop a better photo filing system and focus more on the writing skills as well in the process.</li> <li>To have a better media coverage for the whole project.</li> <li>To expand and engage with other countries especially from the Arab region who can have the same tongue to enrich discussions.</li> </ul>

#### IV. VOLUNTEERS:

##### *Evaluation Tool:*

A quick semi-structured group discussion was held with three volunteers; two of them assisted the staff members and photographers during the sessions by having the training venue and equipment ready each time SURA Arts Academy sessions took place and one assisted in welcoming the guests throughout the exhibition days.

##### *Overall Feedback:*

SURA not only enabled the young participants but also those who have volunteered in the process. The three volunteers who were interviewed stated that SURA developed their skills and they are more capable now of interacting with the younger ages. Their commitment to the project developed from their love to what they did rather than the sense of obligation.

What motivated them to participate varied: One of them is a university student studying graphic designing; his first intention to help in SURA was to benefit himself from the photography lessons given to the young participants; however that intention soon changed as he realized that his personality has been developing along the process as well as it has given him the opportunity to meet professional photographers. The other volunteer clarified that she started volunteering by coincidence but she continued because she became to like the process and the participants. She also realized that she likes photography.

The volunteer who was present during the photo exhibition described the young participants' passion and enthusiasm during the exhibition days, as if they were celebrating their achievement with the people. She said that they had enjoyed sharing the experiences especially with those who understood photography.

The volunteers consider the 'neighbourhood' and 'religion' themes as the most interesting and most dynamic.

One of them described the young participants' enthusiasm during the process as the driving force for the success of SURA; he commented;

*"I will never forget the incident when a participant among youngest age group insisted to wake up very early to take a photo of the sunrise!"*

They recommended including older age groups in SURA Arts Academy, to use more professional cameras and to add more topics in PBYRC's future planning.

#### V. PARENTS:

##### *Evaluation Tool:*

A simple survey was distributed on the participants' parents that consisted of 3 main questions and an open section for comments. The questions aimed to measure the parents' overall impression of the project, scaling the skills which they believe their children acquired through SURA and finally their support to such programs. 15 random surveys were received and following are the main outcomes:

### Overall Feedback:

#### 1. What did you like most about SURA?

Through SURA Arts Academy, the parents believe that their children have developed their personalities, their creativity, and their skills. One of the parents commented:

*“The thing I liked most about SURA was the change that I have seen in my child’s personality!”*

They also believed that it enabled their children not only be equipped with skills to take photos and using cameras, it also allowed them the space to interact with other people and feel confident to express themselves and their opinions.

The project also provided opportunities for the children to visit new areas which they have not seen before, meet professional photographers and search for their best to give.

The parents acknowledged PBYRC staff for being considerate towards their kids other obligations and commitment to school work and exams.

#### 2. Have you witnessed any positive changes on your children after joining SURA Arts Academy?

12 out of the 15 parents answered ‘yes’, 2 did not comment and 1 answered ‘no’.

*If yes, in what way?*

- 14 out of 15 parents believe that their children learned the basic skills of photography and are capable now of taking beautiful and technically correct photos.
- 13 out of the 15 stated that their children have become confident to express their views and opinions persuasively.
- 14 out of the 15 parents have noticed that their children’s understanding of concepts such as citizenship, participation and diversity has developed.

The other positive changes mentioned by the parents include that their children have developed:

- Better life skills such as organizational skills, team work, self awareness, tolerance and confidence
- New friendships
- A higher sense of responsibility towards their community
- Better social interaction skills with their community and friends; some are became more involved in extra curricular activities

#### 3. If PBYRC organizes other youth programs similar to SURA Arts Academy; will you encourage your children to participate?

All the parents confirmed that they will be willing to engage their kids in any of PBYRC future activities

In the *comments* section most of the parents genuinely thanked PBYRC staff and had a couple of recommendations:

- Increase the number of field trips
- Create more national competitions similar to 'Amman in a Picture' and include younger ages

## CONCLUSION:

SURA Arts Academy offered an exceptional experience to all those who participated in it. Both the quantitative and qualitative data indicate that it remarkably attained its anticipated objectives; it provided an interactive environment of learning, a hands-on experience in photography and arts and a vibrant space of interaction not only among the participants but the whole community. The vast majority of the various stakeholders (young participants, volunteers, parents, staff and photographers) were extremely content with the project overall outcomes. They all, directly and indirectly, contributed to the success of the project. Survey and interview results show a great satisfaction with the project delivery model, its art content as well as its social skills/affective outcomes. The main two recommendations which evolved from the various discussions are:

- '*Continuity*' is a prime concern and a demand that has been raised by the various stakeholders. The vast majority has requested a SURA Arts Academy Professional course for those interested in pursuing professional photography and an opportunity for the rest to share their experience with others through SURA II for example<sup>2</sup>. Following are few ideas that can be incorporated while developing the new model:
  - ↳ Consult young participants about the themes for group discussions and the photographers about techniques to be covered.
  - ↳ Include theory of photography into the process not only focus on the practical aspect of it.
  - ↳ Engage the trained participants to co-facilitate sessions with the photographers or be team leaders for other groups.
- Expand SURA Arts Academy model to include a more diverse group of participants from different backgrounds and include more age categories if possible.
  - ↳ This will allow opportunities to thoroughly discuss issues such as diversity, conflict resolution, self acceptance...
- For older groups, develop SURA Arts Academy material in modules where each module covers a specific aspect of photography, a social development theme (ICT for Development, Gender, Sustainable Development...) and divide participants in mission squads to work on a group project that utilizes photography in it.

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<sup>2</sup> *There is a serious intention to start SURA II and Pro as well as establish a photography club and publish a magazine.*