

Spark15



Spark15

**A Story of Community,
Hope, and Belonging**

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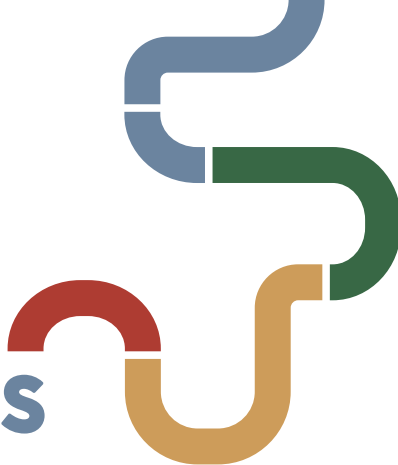
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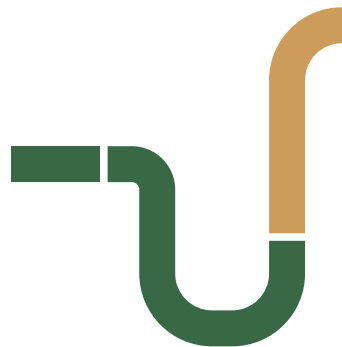


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© Spark15

Meeting the President of Spark15



My name is Dursa Mama Kadu and I'm from Ethiopia. I came to Malta as a refugee and I'm proud to be one of the co-founders of Spark15, one of the first European refugee-led NGOs.

Our journey started in 2015. As a group of brave and determined young people, we recognised and felt the need to work on improving the conditions of refugees in Malta. We met informally for two years and organised activities in different areas, like integration, education, and inclusion. Then, in 2017, with the support of UNHCR Malta, the Maltese President, her Excellency Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca and many other expert NGOs, we established Spark15. Our goal was simple yet ambitious: to make every young refugee feel welcome and included in Maltese society so they can live a dignified and rich life.

Since then, we have tried to provide a group space that responds to what our community needs - because we are them! - and strive to meet those needs in a holistic way for each one of our members. As President, I hope to make Spark15 a place all young people can call home, a place where people are looking out for you, sometimes knowing what you need before you've had to say it. To me, this is what a strong community looks like; young people coming together to share in each other's daily lives and celebrate milestones in each other's journeys.



© Allison Scott

Vision Statement

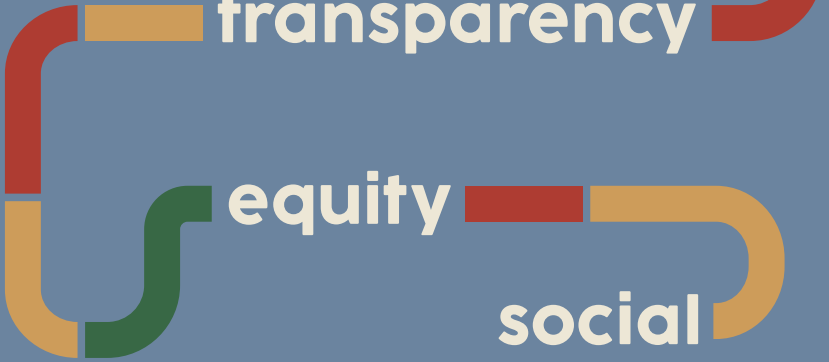
At Spark15, we envision a society in Malta where asylum seekers and refugees are not merely recipients of aid but active participants in shaping their own futures. We aspire to create a community in which every individual, regardless of background, is empowered to lead a fulfilled life of dignity. Through our community-driven initiatives, we strive to foster inclusivity, provide essential services, and build the leadership capabilities of refugees. By investing in their skills and talents, we aim to create a sustainable pathway for integration and advocacy, ultimately contributing to a more harmonious and resilient society.

Our advocacy is rooted in principles of social justice, fairness, and the protection of migrants' rights, including access to education, healthcare, housing, and legal representation. We understand the importance of collaboration and partnership, working alongside governments, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders to address challenges and create inclusive communities. Cultural awareness is fundamental to our approach, ensuring respectful and effective interactions with migrants from diverse backgrounds.

inclusivity



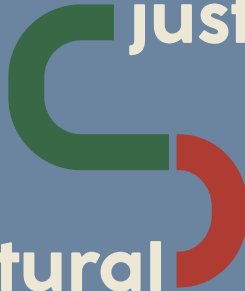
transparency



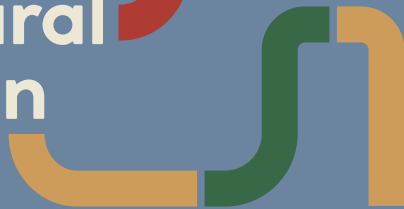
equity



**social
justice**



**multicultural
integration**



**individual
empowerment**



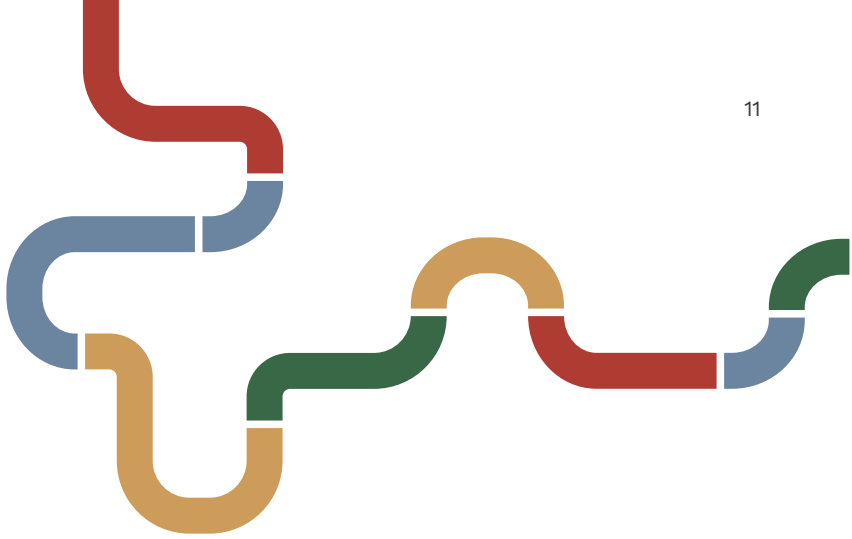
Why Telling the Story of Spark15 Matters

By **Giuliana Fenech, Founder of Lignin Stories**

This storybook is an act of co-creation between the young people recruited to form part of the ‘Where To?’ project by Lignin Stories, the board and volunteers of Spark15, and a number of mentors who came together to learn more about the journey of the organisation and how best to tell and share its story.

Telling the story of Spark15 is important because it is a story of community, hope, and belonging. In an age when so many of us are living away from the places we were born in, and in an age where local communities suffer from the epidemics of disconnection and alienation, it is vital that we remember how to turn to each other, how to listen deeply to what others have to say, how to show up in ways that allow every person to be seen and heard.

Sometimes we may be tempted to think that telling our story in a world full of noise is pointless, that nobody will be interested, or worse that people may ignore or judge us. But the truth is, we never know what ripple effect our story may have on others. Sometimes the most transformative moments of our lives come to us by chance; a recommendation made



in passing, an introduction happening casually in a corridor, a suggestion posed casually. And, if the timing is right, a whole new world of possibilities opens up.

The story of Spark15 can act as a reminder to all of us. It reminds those with experience and resources to connect with those who are still building these, it reminds young people who may feel helpless in the face of global crises hitting us one after the other that they too can make a change, it reminds refugees arriving in a new place that they have many important things to offer to their new communities.

Above all, the story of Spark15 reminds us of what it means to be human. How important it is to dance together, eat together, sit together - in both joy and sorrow, through laughter and tears. Spark15 never stops speaking up for a more fair and just society but all along the way it holds space for family in its truest form, it prioritises showing up as ourselves and being welcomed, just the way we are. There is nothing more precious.



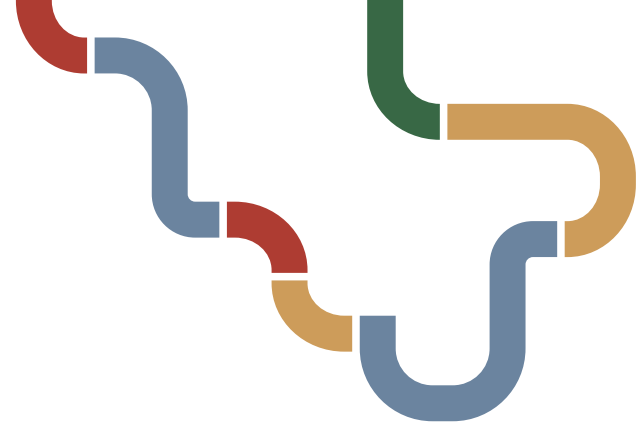
© Lignin Stories



© Lignin Stories



© Darren Agius



‘Where To? Stories of Migration and Belonging is an Erasmus+ project led by Lignin Stories, and Centro Italiano Storytelling in 2023-2024, in collaboration with Spark15. The aim of the project is to bring together a group of young people from all backgrounds, living in Malta, to discuss what home means to us in post-migrant societies and how storytelling can help foster a greater sense of belonging. The participants are invited to think of ways in which these stories can be told and shared to show the power of diversity and community, and this book is testament to that.’

By Giuliana Fenech, Founder of Lignin Stories

‘Working with the young people at Spark15 has humbled me greatly. They are brave young men and women who study and work (or fight to be allowed to), are passionate about their dreams and pursue them relentlessly even without the comfort and security most of us have and take for granted. What surprised me the most was the way they show up, time after time, to share in what they have and to raise each other up. And this is something we, young people, local or migrant can all learn from them.’

By Marcela Fratescu, Mentor in the Where To? project

Thursday, 8 May 2019 19:12

TIMES MALTA

Home News Opinion Features Sport Business Community Entertainment

From a refugee camp to Malta to a US university - this is Hourie Tafec's story

Refugees start from minus 50, not zero, she says as world marks Refugee Day

By Lisa Dimech

12:00pm 7th May 2019



maltatoday

Home News Business Sports Arts Comment Video Archives Magazines

'We can create a win-win situation' | Hourie Tafec & Mohamed Hassan

Immigration is not all necessarily about tensions and conflict. A new student organisation, SPARK 15, aims to change public perceptions by emphasising the social and economic benefits of integration. Founding members Hourie Tafec (president) and Mohamed Hassan explain why a new NGO was needed



Hourie Tafec and Mohamed Hassan

Thursday, 8 May 2019 19:12

TIMES MALTA

Home News Opinion Features Sport Business Community Entertainment

World Refugee Day Spark Fest on Sunday

Fest aims to promote harmonious co-existence, advocate protection of human rights

By Lisa Dimech

12:00pm 7th May 2019




UNHCR Malta

ABOUT US WHAT WE DO ARTS/IN MALTA NEWS AND STORES RESOURCES INFORMATION FOR REFUGEES GET INVOLVED

SPARK 15: The first youth refugee-led NGO

Spark 15 are a group of young refugees who have a clear objective: to encourage other young refugees to become active participants and agents of inclusive societies in Malta, and beyond.

22 Mar 2019




spark15

WHO WE ARE WHAT WE DO LATEST

Home Social Activities Sports

Football with Mapfre

Home of Football with Mapfre



SPARK 15

Home SPARK 15 NEWS 15

Spark 15, new NGO in favour of education and jobs for young immigrants and refugees

By Lisa Dimech

12:00pm 7th May 2019



News of the Week

Spark 15 is a new NGO in Malta which was set up in favour of young refugees and immigrants to help them with their education and to find jobs so that they can participate fully in society.

Spark 15 has the support of the President's Foundation and will be inaugurated on Friday by the Vice Leader of the

FURTHER READING

- 175 students receive an average of 1.5 offers for employment when they complete their course
- Three children who are also sick in hospital
- Big money found on party of top company
- President's flag handed from President's estate
- Man accused of assaulting father and brother while intoxicated

SPARK

WHO WE ARE WHAT WE DO LATEST JOIN CONTACT

Home Spark Activities

Project Poseidon Clean-Up

Home Project Poseidon Clean-Up

LOCAL WORLD SPORTS BUSINESS ARTS LIFE VEGETARIAN BARBERSHOP JOHN H. MALTA

World Refugee Day: Spark Fest shines light on plight of refugees and integration in Malta

Spark15 is an annual event...

SPARK REFUGEE FESTIVAL

Spark15 is a leading NGO dedicated to supporting refugees in Malta. It is proud to announce today's Spark Fest at Balcornia, Bocci Club and Hockey Pitch in Floriana between 2 and 3pm.

Don't miss
Tomorrow one lot can make a difference. You may get more.

The Malta Independent

European Commission

European Website on Integration

Home EU's work Country Tools Good practices Funding

Malta - Spark 15 Football Tournament

Spark15 FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT

The registered youth group Spark15, in association with UNHCR Malta, is hosting a football tournament at Floriana Football Club on Sunday, 30 August from 18:00 to 22:00. The event is free to all, whether to pass or just to watch.

To register a team, or to join an existing team, please send a Facebook message to Spark15 at www.facebook.com/spark15malta.

UNHCR Malta will also be present at the event to collect bank donations, which will be used to support the tournament.

malta

SPORTS EUROPE NEWS CULTURE GAMES

Stand-Up Comedy Fundraiser For Spark15 At The Black Pearl This Saturday

TIMES OF MALTA

Refugees' appeal: help us access education

Give refugees access to education rather than social benefits because that is what will help migrants Mohamed Hassan is one of the 10 refugees in...

Sarraf Hassan - Photo: Steve Darnell-Lyon

UNHCR Malta

ABOUT US WHAT WE DO ASYLUM IN MALTA NEWS AND STORIES RESOURCES INFORMATION FOR REFUGEES GET INVOLVED

WATCH: Making Malta Home | Inspiring Stories of Integration

Video series sheds light on refugee communities in Malta: their challenges, hopes and resilience as they build a new home in Malta

By Tawfik Hagi | 8 Feb 2023

"I don't feel like I'm in a foreign country. Malta is my home."

These words by the Syrian carpenter Arees perfectly encapsulate the essence of an inspiring new video series which suggests that integration of refugees and asylum seekers is possible when a positive outlook meets a welcoming host community.

Spark15: The Origin Story

In 2015, UNHCR and the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) launched an initiative known as the Global Refugee Youth Consultations (GRYC), 'to amplify youth voices in decisions that affect them.'

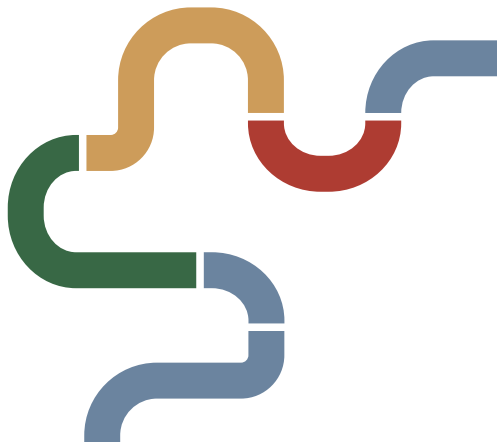
The GRYC included 1,267 young people who participated in fifty-six national or sub-national consultations held in twenty-two countries between October 2015 and June 2016.

In Malta, UNHCR Malta and Kopin invited two Maltese NGOs, Integra and the Organisation for Friendship in Diversity (OFD), to support in the development and piloting of a toolkit to be used for the consultations.

'For the first time ever, this pilot activity brought together fifteen young refugees living in Malta',

Maria Pisani recounts. They gathered for a weekend seminar in Gozo to discuss the challenges that refugees face and how young people can become active agents of change to develop communities into fair and equitable spaces for everyone.

In spite of differences due to geopolitical factors, the outcome of the discussions in Malta matched those emerging from many other countries.





© Spark15



© Spark15

Many of the **challenges** represented in the official GRYC report were, and still are, deemed urgent. A full report can be viewed here:

<https://www.acnur.org/europe/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/59f985597.pdf>

difficulties with legal recognition and obtaining personal documents

difficulty in accessing quality learning, education, and skills-building opportunities

discrimination, racism, xenophobia, and “culture clash”

few youth employment and livelihood opportunities

**lack of information about
asylum, refugee rights,
and available services**


**lack of opportunities to
participate, be engaged, or
access decision makers**

challenges for unaccompanied youth

**lack of safety, security, and
freedom of movement**

**poor access to youth-
sensitive healthcare, including
psychosocial support**

**gender inequality,
discrimination, exploitation, and
violence, including for LGBTI youth**



**generate data and evidence
on refugee youth to promote
accountability to youth**



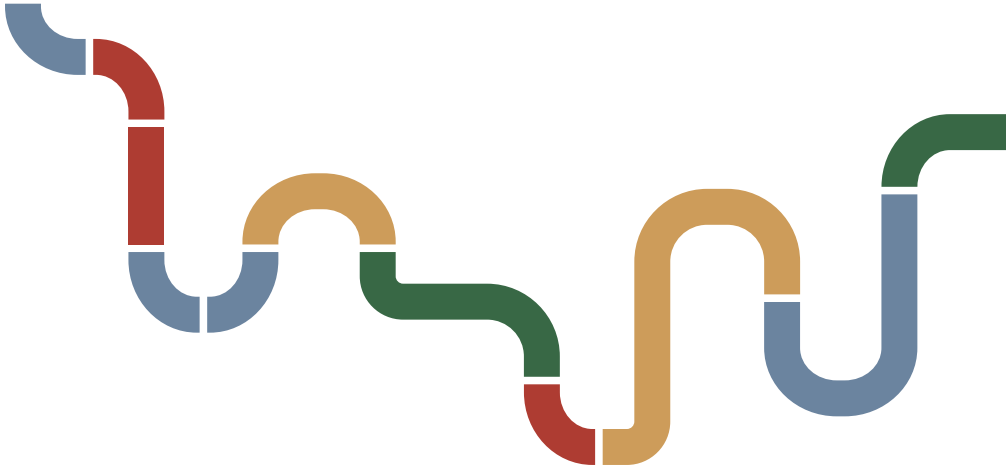
**reinforce refugee youth
as connectors and
peace builders**

**facilitate refugee youth networking
and information sharing**



**support refugee youth physical
and emotional wellbeing**

Preparing the Way for Spark15



The need to actively create safe community spaces for young asylum seekers and refugees arriving in Malta has been felt for a long time. In 2009, the Organisation for Friendship in Diversity (OFD) was set up and with the help of Maltese and migrant volunteers, we ran many activities for young people, aged three to seventeen years old. A number of these young participants became volunteers. Thanks to this, as well as English courses run at the detention centre in Ħal Far, the organisation grew significantly.

In 2015, UNHCR invited Malta to participate in the Global Refugee Youth Consultations. We brought together a mixed group of youth to make this a reality. It was a meaningful and impactful weekend workshop, which generated important conversations that paved the way for Spark15 to come into being as its own organisation. Thanks to another NGO, Integra, weekly meetings were then held regularly at the Valletta drop-in centre, under the mentorship of Paul Galea who had recently begun volunteering with OFD.



Planting this seed strengthened my belief that NGO workers who wish to generate change do so by “making ourselves redundant.” Spark15 showed me that success comes when those who are participants in the original groups become the leaders of the organisation, demonstrating that the strength and resilience of refugees has no bounds. Spark15 is now a beam of light, which I hope continues to shine bright as long as the youths feel the need for it to be there.

By Alba Gutierrez Garcia,
Co-founder of Organisation for Friendship in Diversity



'I founded Integra because I felt called to respond to the injustices I saw happening around me. As the NGO grew, we sought to include more asylum seekers and young people in our processes and projects. We have tried to respond to their learning needs by providing sessions explaining policy and refugee and human rights laws (or pulling in other professionals to provide such education). We have put them in contact with the National Youth Agency, other youth work providers, and also artists and cultural entities. We include them in meetings related to advocacy but nowadays we rarely "invite" or "include" them, they are included in their own right, and sometimes they include us. This is a great satisfaction to all those who began working on these social justice initiatives years ago. I am glad to see Spark15 come into its own.'

By Maria Pisani, Founder of Integra

‘Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home - so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighbourhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.’

By Eleanor Roosevelt, 1958, during a speech at the United Nations called ‘Where Do Human Rights Begin?’

The Global Refugee Youth Consultations in Malta

The GRYC seminar in Gozo was a turning point not only because of the great work that was done but also because of the friendships that were formed among the fifteen young people present. These friendships are based on listening to one another, sharing life experiences and being received with compassion, and on a determination to raise each other up and do the work needed for a better quality of life and a fairer society. There was a lot of solidarity and a lot of momentum - a spark was ignited. The spark, fuelled by the fifteen participants, was too strong to go out at the end of the weekend and so, together, the participants decided to set up an official NGO to encourage other young refugees to become active members of society. Thus, Spark15 was born.





© Spark15



© Spark15

The Official Launch of Spark15 in Malta

With the help of UNHCR Malta, Integra, and a number of volunteers, the vision and paperwork for a youth refugee-led organisation was prepared. An official launch took place on the 17th March 2017, at the President's Palace at San Anton Gardens, with an opening speech given by the President of Malta, her Excellency Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca.





© Tümer Gençtürk



© Tümer Gençtürk



© Tümer Gençtürk



‘We applaud the resilience and dedication of Spark15 as a youth refugee organisation whose members find the time between studying and working to be active members of this vibrant society and their work to promote, and advocate for refugee integration in Malta.’

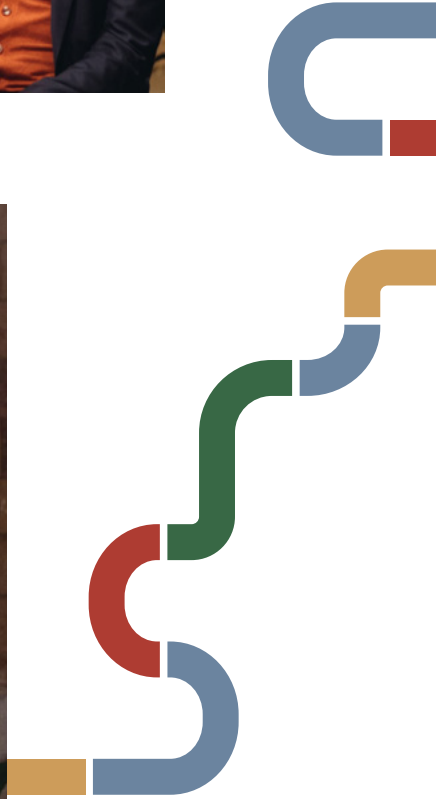
By Kahin Ismail, UNHCR Malta Representative

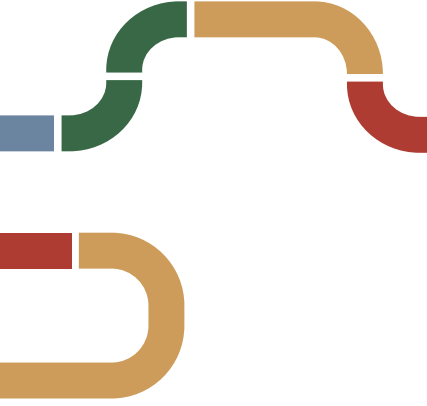


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The Power to Advocate

By Hourie Tafech, Co-founder of Spark15

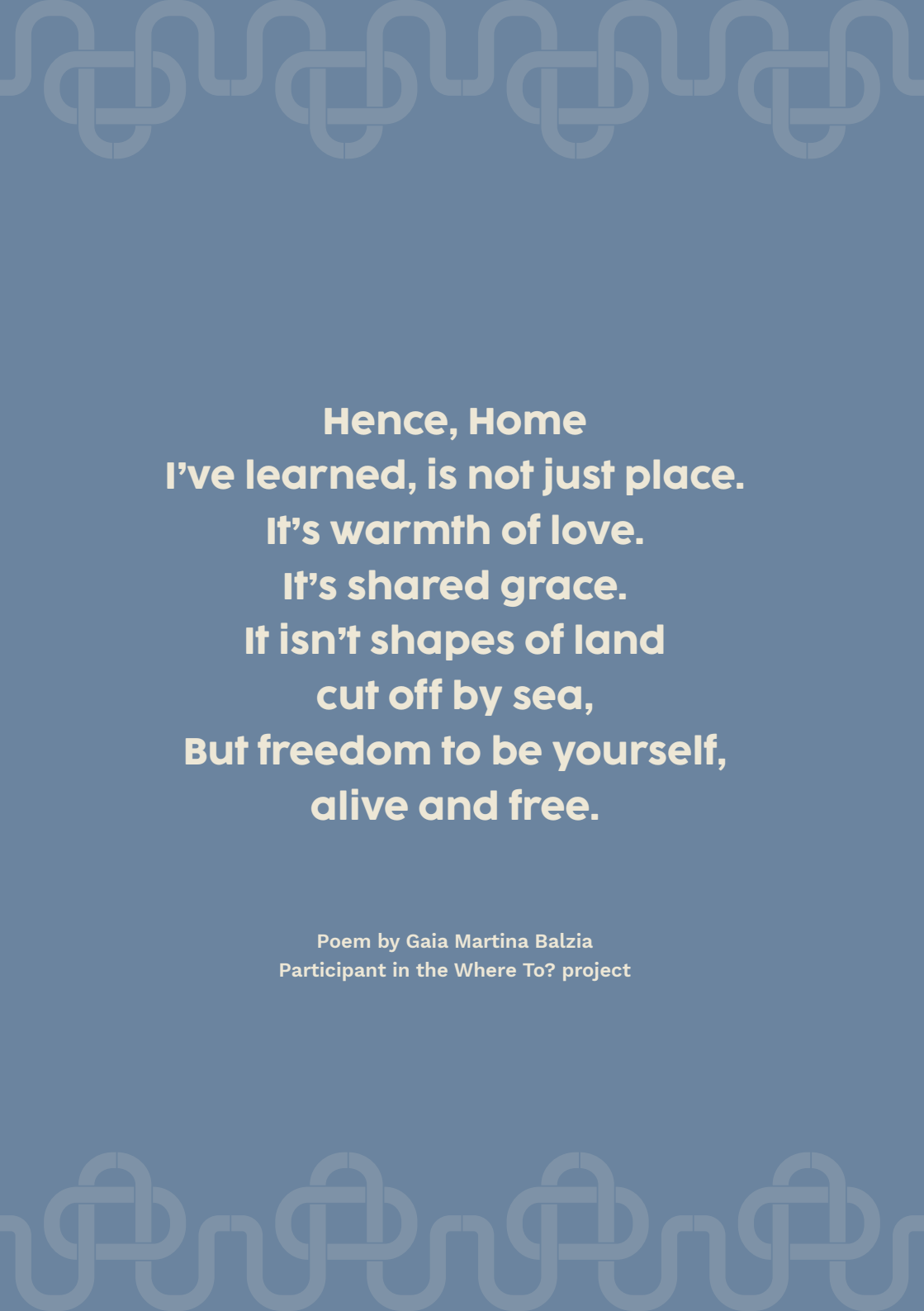


I'm Hourie Tafech, and my story starts in Lebanon, where I was born and raised as a Palestinian refugee. From a young age, I have experienced life through a lens of forced displacement with all its aspects of physical, emotional, and financial insecurity. In 2014, I made a significant move to Malta, where I soon became active in volunteer work and advocacy.

The UNHCR consultation meetings in Malta brought us together: a group of fifteen young people who discussed the barriers young refugees face in Malta. These discussions were eye-opening; we quickly realised that our challenges were shared among us all. This realisation was the essence for forming our own group. We wanted to take matters into our own hands, and thus, Spark15 was born. Our main goal was to advocate for the rights of young refugees, focusing on ensuring access to higher education and the job market. Along the way, we've had significant collaborations, notably with Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca's The Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society and the American Embassy.

I often say, and I really mean it: I wish there was no need for Spark15 or any other group to fight for our basic rights. Imagine a world where everyone, by default, has access to the same opportunities and resources. The thing about being a refugee is that it shapes your entire life, often limiting access to fundamental rights and making life more complicated to navigate. Even if refugees have similar education, backgrounds, qualifications, and potential, just one piece of paper can drastically alter their future.

Getting involved with Spark15 in Malta marked the beginning of my journey in advocacy. It was there that I learned that we refugees have the power to advocate for ourselves. We can come up with effective solutions when we're allowed to take the lead. My journey didn't stop there; it continued in the US. Now, I'm deeply involved in advocating for meaningful participation of refugees in global refugee governance, serving as the Director for Refugee Leadership and Partnerships at Refugees International in Washington DC. This experience has shown me, more than ever, that when given the chance, we can make a significant difference. Often we cannot wait for the chance to come to us, we have to grab it.



**Hence, Home
I've learned, is not just place.
It's warmth of love.
It's shared grace.
It isn't shapes of land
cut off by sea,
But freedom to be yourself,
alive and free.**

Poem by Gaia Martina Balzia
Participant in the Where To? project



Illustration by Daniela Gomez Alvarez
Spark15 member and Participant in the Where To? project

‘Being part of Spark15 has meant being part of a nurturing environment with people who care about my personal and professional growth. And it is the organisation’s volunteers that have made all the difference in my journey. It is through their unwavering support and encouragement that I’ve gained the confidence to pursue my ambitious goals.’

By Achuil Abdalla, Spark15 member and Where To? participant

Advocacy

Advocacy work is one of the most powerful tools in the fight for equitable and just treatment for asylum seekers and refugees.

Spark15's work centres around raising awareness about the struggles refugees face, and collaborating with other organisations in order to drive meaningful change in policy and public opinion. In this regard, Spark15 participates in peaceful protests and holds community talks and information sessions to educate the public on issues pertinent to the refugee community.

The organisation does not offer legal advice, however, it can support refugees who seek information and legal services in Malta by directing them to the right entities.



© Spark15 | Community discussion on housing and homelessness during Spark Fest 2023, a festival organised every year by the refugee community to celebrate and connect with each other.



© Moviment Graffiti | In collaboration with more than twenty other organisations, Spark15 asked the Maltese government to prevent further deaths in the Mediterranean Sea.

‘No human should be forced to leave their home in search of safety.’

By Nagmeldeen Arbab, Spark15 treasurer

‘Our lives are still decided by others without any involvement or participation from our side. Youth are the future custodians of any given society. As such, they should be given a chance to lead. Having an active refugee youth NGO is the first step in solving numerous challenges youth encounter on a daily basis.’



© Umit Vurel | Dursa Mama Kadu speaking at the European Parliament (as part of an event organised by the MILE project) on the importance of having migrant and refugee communities directly involved in policy making and as equal partners in funding opportunities.



© JRS Malta | Advocating for human rights for all.

Education

One of the key ways to facilitate integration is to support young refugees in obtaining access to education.

Spark15 has identified two key areas of need in this regard; English literacy and digital literacy. The English classes offered include basic conversation classes run at the drop-in centre in Valletta, as well as a Higher Education Programme, which aims to prepare migrant and refugee students for university education.

The Digital Literacy programme offers classes at the basic and advanced level. In order to increase participants' development of digital skills, Spark15 also issues regular calls for the sponsorship of laptops and other equipment, which it then distributes among its members.

The organisation also invites its members to participate in various community projects that allow them to gain soft and transferable skills, as well as the possibility to make important contacts in their fields of interest.





© Spark15 | Spark15 digital literacy class.



© Spark15 | Spark15 training courses.

One such project was a sailing trial, organised in collaboration with Jarhead Young Sailors. Another is the 'Where To' project in which participants worked together to understand what home means in a diverse community, organised in collaboration with Lignin Stories and Centro Italiano Storytelling, funded by Erasmus+.

Spark15's education programmes are entirely volunteer-run and depend upon the generous help of our dedicated volunteer tutors, the University of Malta, and other partner organisations.



© Spark15 | Spark15 members participating in a Jarhead Young Sailors trial.



© Spark15 | Volunteering to teach with Spark15.

‘Learning a language together is a gateway to learning about each other and building deeper connections. Recently, a grammar exercise I was leading as part of our advanced English class turned into a conversation about daily routines, which then turned into a discussion about meditation and the effects of technology on our concentration. It’s rare to get the opportunity to think and learn together like that and I really appreciate my students for bringing their curiosity and open-mindedness to the classroom.’

By Kirstin Sonne, Volunteer Teacher at Spark15

Sport

Playing football together has become an integral part of Spark15's community.

The Spark15 football team, Spark FC, founded in 2021, has hosted over sixty players since its inception. The members meet for practice each Sunday.

Being together on the pitch is more than just a way to exercise, it is also a space to chat and make friends. It is a way through which the community creates a sense of camaraderie and unity. For some members, this is the perfect avenue to perfect their skills and can offer the opportunity to be scouted professionally.

'I am Salim Muhammad. I am part of the Spark15 football team and I always go to the weekly football training. I love being part of a family; with football we form a close community. It is something I greatly look forward to. This training is not only my hobby but part of my stress relief.'

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© Spark15 | The Spark15 football team, Spark FC.



© Spark15 | Spark Football Festival held on 18 December, 2022.

Social/Outreach

Holding activities where people can meet, socialise, and form new connections has been an important part of Spark15's mission. The organisation hosts events that are open to everyone and that act as a catalyst to integrating migrant and local communities.

Some events centre around cooking, dancing or swimming together. Others are gatherings to celebrate each other's achievements. Yet others bring people together to give back to the community by making Malta a cleaner place. Irrespective of the theme, the ethos of Spark15 resonates clearly at each gathering: to create a safe and inviting space where everyone feels welcome.



© Spark15 | Live music and dancing at Spark Fest in June 2023.



© Josmar Muscat/Valletta Design Cluster | Sudanese cooking event held in November 2023 where members of the community met to delight in Sudanese cooking and celebrate the students who finished their digital literacy course.



© Spark15 | Community clean-up at Bahar iċ-Ċaġhaq organised in collaboration with Blue EchoTech and Malta Chamber of Scientists, and supported by the IMPETUS project.

Finding Belonging

By Nagmeldeen Arbab,
Spark15 treasurer




My journey with Spark15 started a while back. I arrived in Malta in late 2014 and I soon realised that there is a lack of community representation here, especially with people from my background. So I got involved; first by co-founding the Sudanese Migrant Association, and later by becoming an active member of Spark15. The work these organisations do is really important.

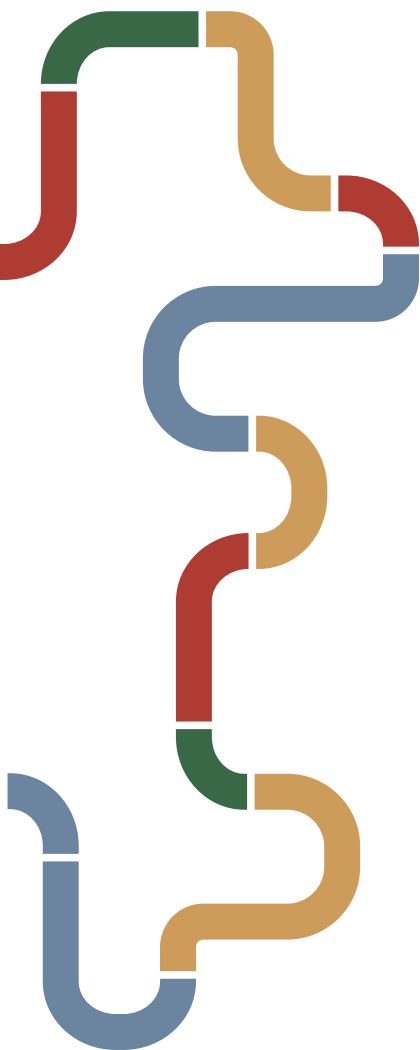
‘Because, for one, young people deserve the opportunity to represent themselves at different levels in society.’

You cannot be part of a society if you don't see yourself in it. So it's important to create a platform for young people to speak their mind. But more than representation, young people need to belong to a community. And this is why Spark15 is not a guest organisation, it is a family. If you've ever been to one of our events, you know that people are happy to come together. It's a safe place; there is laughter and there is dancing. We know that young people are missing their families and loved ones so we're here to help create that space where everyone can feel like they can be themselves and they belong.

Universal Human Rights: Spark15's Guiding Principle



With the passing of time, Spark15's members and activities change but the values and vision of the organisation remain guided by the Universal Human Rights. Knowing and advocating for the thirty rights and freedoms outlined in the Declaration ensures that we continue to progress towards a fairer and more just society.



‘The Universal Declaration of Human Rights emerged from the ashes of war and the horrors of the Holocaust. The traumatic events of the Second World War brought home that human rights are not always universally respected. The extermination of almost 17 million people during the Holocaust, including 6 million Jews, horrified the entire world. After the war, governments worldwide made a concerted effort to foster international peace and prevent conflict. This resulted in the establishment of the United Nations in June 1945. On 10 December 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations announced the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) - thirty rights and freedoms that belong to all of us. The thirty rights and freedoms set out in the UDHR include the right to asylum, the right to freedom from torture, the right to free speech and the right to education. It includes civil and political rights, like the right to life, liberty, free speech and privacy. It also includes economic, social and cultural rights, like the right to social security, health, and education.’

By Amnesty International

A stylized number 1 composed of a blue vertical bar and a gold horizontal bar at the top.

All human beings are born free and equal.

A stylized number 2 composed of a gold top curve and a blue bottom horizontal bar.

Everyone is equal regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, politics, or where they were born.

A stylized number 3 composed of a gold top curve and a green bottom curve.

Everyone has the right to life (and to live in freedom and safety).

A stylized number 4 composed of a green top curve and a blue bottom horizontal bar.

Everyone has the right to be free from slavery.

A stylized number 5 composed of a blue top horizontal bar and a gold bottom curve.

Everyone has the right to be free from torture.

A stylized number 6 composed of two overlapping shapes: a blue shape on top and an orange shape on the bottom.

Everyone has the right to be recognised before the law.

A stylized number 7 composed of two overlapping shapes: a blue shape on top and a green shape on the bottom.

We are all equal before the law.

A stylized number 8 composed of two overlapping shapes: an orange shape on top and a blue shape on the bottom.

Everyone has the right to seek justice if their rights are violated.

A stylized number 9 composed of two overlapping shapes: an orange shape on top and a green shape on the bottom.

Everyone has the right to freedom from arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

A stylized number 10 composed of two overlapping shapes: a blue shape on the left and an orange shape on the right.

Everyone has the right to a fair trial.

11

Everyone has the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty.

12

Everyone has the right to privacy and freedom from attacks on their reputation.

13

Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and to be free to leave and return to their own country.

14

Everyone has the right to seek asylum from persecution.

15

Everyone has the right to a nationality.

16

Everyone has the right to marry and to have a family.

17

Everyone has the right to own property.

18

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.

19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

20

Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

21

Everyone has the right to take part in government and to have equal access to public service.

22

Everyone has the right to social security.

23

Everyone has the right to work, to equal pay, to protection against unemployment, and the right to form and join trade unions.

24

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure.

25

Everyone has the right to a decent standard of living, including food, clothing, housing, medical care, and social services.

26

Everyone has the right to education.

27

Everyone has the right to participate in and enjoy culture, art, and science.

28

Everyone has the right to a social and international order where the rights in this Declaration can be fully realised.

29

We have a duty to other people and we should protect their rights and freedoms.

30

Nobody can take away these rights and freedoms from us.

Stepping into Courage

By Illia Kolesnikov,
Spark15 member and Where To? participant



I'm really grateful for Spark15 and its impact on me and our community. First, the organisation taught me skills like communication, teamwork, and leadership – all incredibly valuable in today's world. It also made me rethink what's important for me and what isn't. But most importantly, it got me to start thinking about the future and what I can do to achieve my goals and dreams.

‘Courage is at the heart of leaving your past life behind to begin a new chapter in an unknown place.’

My family and I had no choice but to leave Kyiv. We only had a backpack and a long road ahead of us, through Chernivtsi, Lviv, Warsaw. Two weeks later we arrived in Malta. Arriving in Malta was not a dramatic event, but it gave us some long-awaited sense of safety.

Somewhere along that road, I met Spark15, whose members made the biggest impact on my experience here in Malta. The community is kind and heartwarming; they welcomed me with open hearts and opened opportunities to further my studies. Everyone at Spark15 is different: we have different experiences and different backgrounds, but everyone shares a common goal; to grow ourselves and the community we belong to.

I learned that everyone needs that group of people who you can dream with; they give me the power to move. These are the people I’m happiest to have found.

The Impact of Volunteering with Spark15



© Spark15



© Spark15

The wellbeing of Spark15 depends on its volunteers. The organisation always has an open call for people to join and contribute whatever they can.

‘Volunteering with Spark15 means being part of something larger and meaningful. I truly believe anyone should have the right to migrate, be included and have the chance to be an active participant of any society - irrespectively of their colour, background, nationality etc. I am deeply disturbed by the hypocrisy of our countries (Europe and beyond) and the mean attitude shown by governments and individuals towards foreigners - human beings in need! I am deeply ashamed of it.

I feel it's important to do something about it. Spark15 is a refugee-led organisation, which cuts out many levels of bureaucracy and deals directly with the community of migrants in Malta. If my involvement can help even just one individual and can help create a bridge for these worlds to become one...then it's worth it.

My advice to young people thinking of volunteering is to get in touch; you will not regret it! My own children and I have met the members of Spark15 and have developed friendships, as well as come to admire some of the amazing stories and strengths young people show. Apart from making genuine friends, it will help open your mind, challenge some of the erroneous views spread about migrants in our society, and develop many skills that can help you in your own education and life. Spark15 will help you understand what the best way to volunteer is according to your own skills. We will also be able to provide you with references for further education, CAS, or employment.’

By Chiara Maroino, Spark15 Volunteer

'My experience volunteering for Spark15 grew into me taking on the official role of secretary, although as a small NGO, we do everything that needs to be done and we are not fixed in our roles. I have been with Spark15 from its inception as a group of young refugees who went to Gozo to discuss their challenges as part of the UNHCR Youth Consultations. I had started as a mentor and moved on to a more administrative role as time went by. Within this role, I have seen the NGO flourish from a group of young adults who were not really sure where they were going or what they wanted to accomplish, to being a fully fledged NGO with aims and a clear focus. In the long run, I hope to see the organisation grow to be a voice of the refugee community, run by the refugee community. Because of my age, my experience and also because of the long-term focus of Spark15, I still often act as a mentor and teacher, in hope that eventually this role will be taken over by someone from the refugee community. This extends to all roles in the NGO that are taken up by non-refugee persons.





© Spark15

My advice to young people who are beginning their journey in volunteering is this: be careful with your time. Start slowly and increase as your time allows you to. It is easy to burn out when volunteering whilst having other jobs/responsibilities in your life. If you would like to volunteer with Spark15, be prepared to meet many different people from different cultures each with their positives and negatives. Be ready to open your mind to understand these differences – it's a steep learning curve that one should handle with respect. Enjoy what goes on and be satisfied, for you are giving back to this world. Volunteering is a two-way endeavour; you have a positive effect on people, which, in turn, gives you back a sense of being worthwhile, of gaining empathy and knowledge. For me, I have learnt much in my nine years with this group, both on a technical level (I am much better with social media, I have learnt to organise meetings, events, my life!) but also on an emotional level. I have dealt with people from all walks of life, both easy-going and happy people, but also some difficult people. I have learnt what empathy is, something I never really understood before, and importantly I have learnt the meaning of dignity. I have also made many, many friends along the way.'

By Paul Galea, Spark15 Volunteer and Secretary

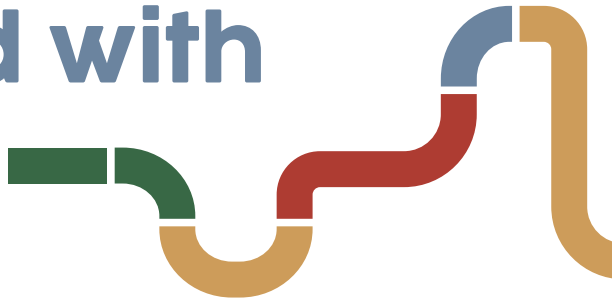
**‘How do you contribute?
First and foremost, identify a
cause that you deeply care
about. There are many local
organisations that are working
to find solutions to some of the
complex problems we face.
Whether it’s through advocacy,
community organising or
raising awareness, you
can make a change.
Every contribution counts.’**

By Lisa Marie Zammit, Participant in the Where To? project



© Lignin Stories | Spark15 participating in the Where To? project.

How to Get Involved with Spark15



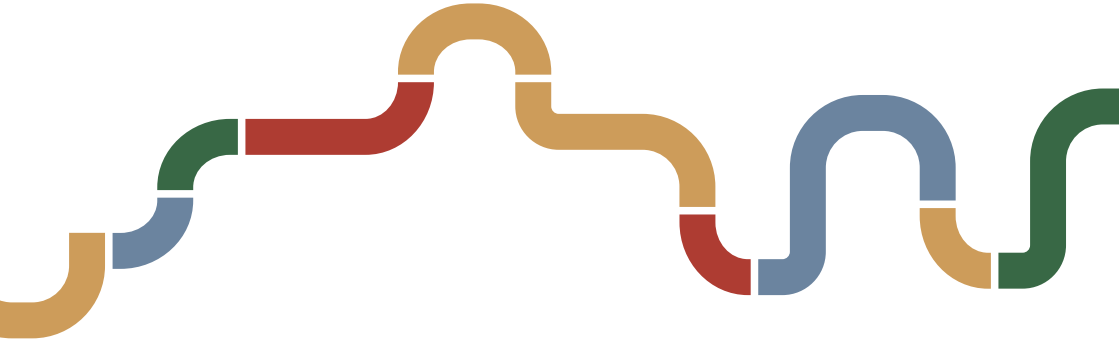
Spark15 encourages all young people to become members of the organisation and to get involved by volunteering.

Young people are encouraged to get involved by joining one of the following teams:

The communications team that handles the website and social media, including content editing, graphic design, video/audio and newsletter production, as well as fundraising (preparing proposals, applying for funds, organising fundraising activities).

The administration and activities team that handles the financial/accounts administration, correspondence (answering general requests etc.), organising meetings, helping to manage IT systems, communication with members (emails, distributing newsletters etc.), and coordinating social activities.

The sports team that assists the sports coordinator in liaising with stakeholders, organising tournaments and training, recruiting new players, and developing plans for future sports activities.



Mentors are encouraged to get involved and can contribute by:

Offering their time to run classes, helping with the organisation of events, helping to raise sponsorship, networking and putting Spark15 in touch with relevant contacts in legal, educational, corporate, and social environments.



© Spark15 | Sponsorship is important to keep Spark15 going. The organisation often receives donations of laptops, bicycles, educational materials, and experiences.

The Hope that Connection Brings



By Giuliana Fenech, Founder of Lignin Stories

The story of Spark15 is a story based on human connection, often discovered by chance.

My own introduction to this incredible organisation came through a newspaper article in which two young, brave men - Sari Albaaga and Mohamed Hassan - advocated for equitable access to education. Their words, raw and compelling, echoed in my head for weeks after I had read them. I wondered whether anybody from the institutions that they were addressing had responded, especially because I was a member of one of them. Checking in with the editor of The Times of Malta, Herman Grech, who had published the article, I found out that their plea was met with silence. This was heartbreaking to me.

Being an educator by profession, I deeply believe that learning is the first step to healing both ourselves and our troubled world. I asked Herman to put me in touch with Mo and Sari and a few days later we met. Hearing about the bureaucratic and financial reasons why higher education was difficult for them to access, I decided to volunteer with Integra to set up an English Language learning programme and to lobby the University to create fairer access policies. We recruited volunteer teachers, asked language schools

to help us run mock IELTS tests, raised money to pay for the actual tests, and obtained laptop donations and bicycles to enable more refugees and asylum seekers to participate in our courses.

Each time we asked the University for help, we were greeted warmly and with a strong sense of goodwill. It struck me that when asked to help directly, most people respond generously. If we asked for five laptops, most often we received fifteen. If we asked for two scholarships, most often we received ten. Whenever we asked for support with paperwork, we were invited in for a chat and a coffee.

Spark15 taught me that there is huge power in connection, in sitting across from one another to see and be seen, to hear and be heard. And with this, also deep hope. I joined Spark15 at a difficult time in my life not sure of what I could give but what I learnt is that if I take one step forward, others will join. Spark15 has taught me, and from the many testimonies represented in this book, I think it is safe to say it has taught us, that we are never alone.

Throughout our journey with Spark15, the question of what we can give fades and what replaces it over and over again is gratitude for what we receive. It's the essence of the human experience to be part of stories bigger than our own. Connection is what makes us feel well. This is what we set out to explore in the project Where To? Stories of Migration and Belonging. This is what we share and celebrate in Spark15: A Story of Community, Hope, and Belonging.

Take your next step forward. Reach out to Spark15 and join the wonderful community that these young people are building. You will be warmly welcomed.



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