

# MIKE



## Goodwill Ambassador for Climate Action

Regional Bureau for Arab States - United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

### WHO IS MIKE?

He may be a **MEDICAL WONDER, CLIMATE ACTIVIST, SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR, AND PROFESSIONAL ATHLETE**, but above all else,

MICHAEL HADDAD IS A MAN ON A MISSION.

Michael is a living proof that there is never enough reason to lose hope, and there is certainly no room for excuses.

### MICHAEL'S STORY

At the age of 6, Michael suffered a jet ski **accident that left him paralyzed from the chest down**. He lost 75% of his mobile motor functions. Bound to a wheelchair for the rest of his life, Michael challenged his fate. After years of training and with a 'Swing Through Gait' (SWG) moving pattern he developed, **Michael was able to stand up and walk with an exoskeleton— a feat deemed medically impossible.**

*Michael, however, was just getting started!*



Receiving the blessings of Pope Francis for the upcoming 100Km Arctic Walk during a private audience at the Vatican City on June 2, 2021. [CLICK HERE](#) Full Press Release.



United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres lent his support for The North Pole Walk for Climate Action [CLICK HERE](#) Full Press Release.



Achim Steiner, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme

# ABILITY

## Sharing the Passion of Walking

Following these incredible achievements, [MICHAEL HAS BEEN NAMED, IN NOVEMBER 2019, A REGIONAL GOODWILL AMBASSADOR IN THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME \(UNDP\) FOR ARAB STATES.](#)

Michael takes on [physical challenges](#) that most able-bodied athletes would shy away from, and he always does so for a cause.

**Calling for reforestation** of the iconic Lebanese Cedar - the country's national symbol- **Michael crossed 19Km-60,000 steps on mountainous trails.** He has also **climbed 40 meters up the famous Raouche rock** in Beirut to bring attention to marine pollution and has **snowshoed to the top of the 'Black Peak' -the highest peak in the MENA Region** - to stress the need for action against the melting ice caps and the impact of Climate Change.

Michael's physical ability to achieve **these record-breaking feats -despite his condition-** positions him as **an ultra-endurance athlete.** The international attention he has garnered has turned his story into a lesson about resilience and willpower.



Crossed 19Km- 60,000 Steps at Cedar Lebanon

CLICK [HERE](#) Full Documentary

**“THAT FIRST STEP WAS SO HARD, BUT THAT ONE STEP I TOOK CHANGED MY LIFE.”**

*Michael Haddad*



# SCIENCE

## Research & Development

**Assistive Technology** - Michael is closely followed by **scientists** from the [American University of Beirut \(AUB\)](#), the [Lebanese American University \(LAU\)](#), and **other international institutions**. The team includes a **multidisciplinary cluster** of professionals, from neurologists and physical therapists to engineers. They study his performance and his brain's neuroplasticity to better understand how he executes these physical feats.

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*“Michael is a walking lab for science and humanity”*

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INNOVATION CENTER - LAU

MR. SAAD EL ZEIN

Michael's case contributes hugely to **ASSISTIVE AND EXOSKELETON TECHNOLOGY**. Michael gets more out of his exoskeleton than thought medically possible. The scientific team closely studies his locomotive techniques, hoping that individuals typically unqualified for an exoskeleton could use one to stand up and walk. This leads to the team's second objective: **to build a lightweight, semi-powered, smart exoskeleton** that would improve the user's balance and energy efficiency, eventually allowing them to develop their own self-balancing techniques. This would be a major **technological breakthrough** in the field and a solution to paraplegic patients providing them with unparalleled levels of independence.

### The Exoskeleton Put to the Test

By [Dana K. Haffar](#) | March 26, 2019



On March 18, UNDP Lebanon Climate Change Champion Michael Haddad walked 5km in Ouyoun El Simane as a first step in his preparatory journey for the North Pole initiative, to test the [exoskeleton developed by LAU's SOE](#) and evaluate his physical performance on the snow. Michael will be crossing 100km in the North Pole to raise awareness of the devastating consequences of climate change.

CLICK [HERE](#)

To watch a Full Documentary  
of the Scientific Team



Testing & Trainings with LAU specialists





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*“As far as we know, Michael is a unique case in the world. Among paraplegics, including paraplegic athletes, I'm not aware of any other individual who has the same level of Michael's spinal cord injury and is able to be as independent, versatile and as high-performing, athletically speaking.”*

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HEAD OF PHYSIOTHERAPY AND REHABILITATION

DR. TAREK GHERBAL



Climbing the Iconic Raouche Rock\_ Lebanon

CLICK [HERE](#) Full Documentary



Snowshoeing to the top of the 'Black Peak' \_ Lebanon

CLICK [HERE](#) Full Documentary



# IMPACT

## Climate Change Mission

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Immediately after his [designation](#) as Regional Goodwill Ambassador, endurance athlete [Michael Haddad](#) [purposed his 100Km polar walk for climate action \(PoWCA\) to bring attention to one of the gravest consequences of climate change](#)—the fast melting polar ice sheet and to call for action to address the global climate emergency. The UN Secretary General [lent his support](#) to this endeavour, giving Michael a UN flag to carry in his walk.

Michael will be mustering all his willpower to perform the Arctic Walk next winter season (Dec 2021- March 2022), bringing attention to the melting arctic ice and calling for concerted and scaled-up climate action.

CLICK [HERE](#) for Full Press Release - PoWCA

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# PEOPLE

## Inclusion - Leave No One Behind

*“Leaving No One Behind” – Part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by all United Nations Member States*

Unfortunately the COVID-19 pandemic that swept across the world in 2020 caused the disruption of the PoWCA momentum especially that the research and development activities and logistical preparations that are deemed necessary for progressing forward, slowed down.

Michael and UNDP rechannelled the PoWCA preparation energy into a [“Stepping Ahead of COVID – SAC”](#) initiative, which involved Michael completing, short 4-5 km walks to underscore the need to make UNDP-led responses to the COVID pandemic inclusive of persons with disabilities (PwD), ensuring they are not left behind.



Photo taken from AnNahar Article; CLICK [HERE](#) to view full article

Under the SAC, Michael completed in October 2020, the [Beirut Walk for Inclusion](#), a [UN initiative](#) to improve service for PwD and ensure that **the rebuilding of parts of Beirut destroyed in the Port Explosion of 4 August 2020**, is done in an inclusive and accessible manner. Later in December 2020, Michael completed the [Egypt Walk for Inclusion](#) at the foot of the **Great Pyramids of Giza**, a new UNDP initiative to promote local production and **development of assistive technologies** to facilitate the lives of persons with disabilities and enhance their participation in communities.

### BEIRUT WALK FOR INCLUSION

CLICK [HERE](#) for Press Release; CLICK [HERE](#) to watch Announcement Video



### EGYPT WALK FOR INCLUSION

CLICK [HERE](#) for Press Release; CLICK [HERE](#) to View Event



# OUTREACH

## Endorsements & Collaborations

Highly distinguished institutions and governmental establishments such as the [Canadian Parliament](#) and the Assemblée Générale in France endorsed the North Pole Initiative and recognized Michael's significant achievements.



Michael Haddad's introduction at the [Canadian Parliament](#) CLICK [HERE](#) Short Documentary



At the [Assemblée Générale](#) in Paris, France



[U.S. Embassy in Beirut](#) voicing out support at the Lebanese American University CICK [HERE](#) Short Documentary



Ulrika Modéer (Assistant Secretary General and Director of Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy at UNDP).



# INSPIRE

## Future Youth

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*"If we truly believe in ourselves we are able to **ELIMINATE** every **IMPOSSIBILITY** in our lives, for me that impossibility was my Disability"*

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**MICHAEL HADDAD**

Michael is fighting on many fronts. His primary battle remains to overcome the daily challenges caused by his injury, but that doesn't stop him from pushing himself to the limit.

He shares as a **keynote speaker in schools, universities, and businesses alike**, his inspiring story and the lessons it teaches; lessons that apply to everyone indiscriminately.

*Michael makes every fight his own!*

Be it raising awareness about climate change, finding a solution for people with spinal injuries, or inspiring people that are demoralized, Michael is up for it, and then some.



Keynote Speaking Event  
American Community School\_ Beirut



Keynote Corporate Speaking Event  
Gisworx Dubai

