

JORDAN INGO FORUM NEWSLETTER



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FORUM



September Update JIF SECRETARIAT

THIS ISSUE:

Lutheran World Federation.....	2
Collateral Repair Project.....	4
Danish Refugee Council.....	5
Blumont.....	6
Finn Church Aid.....	7
International Catholic Migration	8
Habitat for humanity.....	9
IOCC.....	10
Jesuit Refugee Service Jordan.....	11
Medair.....	12
Terre des hommes Lausanne.....	14
Mercy Corps.....	15

Since the beginning of 2022, the JIF community has focused on redefining our strategy and ensuring ongoing coordination with key actors in Jordan, including our members and observers, government counterparts, IFIs, donor community and national NGO partners.

JIF has also expanded with new members: Education for Employment and Search for Common Ground, and the GOAL Syria office as observer. While humanitarian crises remain underfunded worldwide, the decrease in humanitarian funding allocations in Jordan is affecting many of our members and national partners' capacity to maintain essential services targeting populations in Jordan in need of humanitarian assistance. Many JIF members are re-orienting their programming to respond to both protracted humanitarian needs and persistent development needs, in line with national strategies in Jordan.

The development programming in Jordan is increasingly integrating more refugees. However, direct critical services for the most vulnerable, regardless of their status, in Jordan have been impacted negatively. Furthermore, bureaucratic impediments continue to slow humanitarian efforts and limit the reach of humanitarian programming, particularly those activities seeking to target non-Syrian refugees and refugees living outside of the formal camps.

The JIF community calls on the key actors in the humanitarian and development response in Jordan to coordinate closely around priority needs for vulnerable populations in Jordan in order to ensure a clear strategy for addressing the needs of the most vulnerable and leaving no one behind.

LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

LWF- Nuha's Story

LWF has maintained a continuous presence in Jordan since 2012, delivering effective and appropriate programs to approximately 300,000 refugees and vulnerable Jordanians. LWF has community centers in Irbid, Zarqa, and Zaatari Camp. The story below is from Nuha Anwar Abu Khashreef, she shared with us her experience after participating in Zumba and nutrition activities. These programs are part of our recreational activities, which intend to enhance psychosocial well-being.

Nuha is 39 years old and comes from Dara'a in Syria. After the divorce from her first husband at the beginning of the crisis, she decided to take her two youngest children to escape the war-torn area and go to Jordan. The initial plan was to return to Syria whenever the situation calmed down. After getting married again in Jordan, she had two more children. But the situation with her second husband is also challenging and causes her additional emotional stress.

When Nuha approached LWF, she was aware that she was in a poor mental state. The flight experience, difficult life circumstances, the troubles with her husband, and especially the separation from her older children, who still live in Syria, gave her a hard time. She suffered from depression and listlessness and lived a withdrawn life. Anxiety caused severe sleep problems, which had a negative impact on her family life, as she could not adequately care for her children or have enough drive to do the housework. Her mental health issues caused an unhealthy lifestyle which resulted in weight gain.



Photograph 1: Woman at LWF Community Center doing a weight assessment during a nutrition session.

She described that as negative coping mechanisms; she developed unhealthy eating habits and, therefore, sought help from the nutritionist.

Through the nutrition sessions she attended, she learned that she had a nutritional deficiency, but even more important were the new healthy habits that she started to implement in her daily life. Having regular mealtimes throughout the day or eating less sugary foods are some examples. What was critical for her was to realize the significant impact that physical activity has on both her physical and mental health.

“I love the Zumba sessions! Whenever I go there, I feel energized for the rest of the week. When I can't go to the classes, I like to turn on a song at home and teach my children some movements that I learned in Zumba. It's like having a big party at home!”

The services that Nuha received resulted in significant achievements. She understands now that she deserves to take some time for herself, she even managed to lose over 7 kg in only two months. Her family benefitted a lot from the new changes, especially the regular meals throughout the day and the healthier food options that Nuha implemented in their diet. These new healthy habits directly affected her mental health and significantly impact her self-esteem.

“I feel much more confident now when I go out on the street. I used to feel very uncomfortable in public because I thought everyone was looking at my weight. I am very grateful to LWF because I know I would not have made it without their help. “

These great accomplishments gave her motivation and hope for the future.

“I believe now I can accomplish even greater things! I would like to be more independent and able to make a living for myself and my children. Therefore, I want to establish a home-based business and sell homemade cheese, yogurt, and pickles.”



Photograph 2: Participants of a Zumba class at a LWF Community Center.

The first steps in the right direction have already been taken as she participated in courses about entrepreneurship and learned how she could effectively invest her resources and capabilities to build a resilient future.

COLLATERAL REPAIR PROJECT

CRP- Ibrahim's Story

Ibrahim is from Iraq, and came to Jordan during the Iraq war. What follows is his story.

“There was a lot of hopelessness during that time, and a lot of roaming...”

Before Ibrahim got connected with CRP, he was struggling to see a way forward. An intelligent child, Ibrahim felt frustrated by the slow pace of learning in his school and failed to connect with his classmates. Eventually, he dropped out of school entirely. Following this, he spent his days at home. Displaced and without a community around him from which to draw support, he described his life during this period to us as ‘empty, void, and vacant’.

“As refugees we’re looking on to the future in hopes of resettlement, and that was really the only anchor that we held onto...”

Ibrahim never imagined his absence from school would continue for three years. Like many refugees in the communities we serve, he and his family always held onto the hope that they would be resettled in the near future. Ibrahim imagined he would soon re-enter formal education in their new home. Unfortunately for Ibrahim and his family, their dream of resettlement did not come true.

“Once I got into CRP, the thing that I started to develop which I did not have was community...”

Ibrahim first came into contact with CRP via our English classes. As he integrated into the CRP community he made friends he is still in touch with today, and found mentors he was able to look to for guidance. One of these mentors noticed his potential and encouraged him to apply to the King's Academy, a private boarding school in Madaba. Ibrahim was not only accepted, but received a full scholarship to fund his studies.

“I can confidently say that I would not be where I am today if it were not for CRP...”

The encouragement and support Ibrahim received at CRP changed the trajectory of his life. Following his time at the King's Academy, Ibrahim received a full scholarship to study at Centre College in the US. He is now in his second year of study. When asked about the future, he says perhaps he will pursue postgraduate studies, but for now he wants to focus on regaining what he describes as his ‘lost youth’.



DANISH REFUGEE COUNCIL - DRC

DRC- Tamam's Story

First Steps towards Financial Independence

Tamam is walking vehemently towards being independent

11 years on, more than 650,000 Syrian refugees remain in Jordan, half of which are aged between 14 to 24 years old. Strengthening the resilience of refugee and Jordanian youth and working towards sustainable solutions for them live and work in dignity remains a priority.

The “Resilient Youth, Socially and Economically Empowered” (RYSE) Consortium is a partnership led by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), and includes Jordan River Foundation, Generations for Peace, Mercy Corps and INJAZ, with funding from the Novo Nordisk Foundation.

With the aim of helping young Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanians affected by the Syrian crisis, the three-year programme is built to empower youth with its two main programmatic pillars; civic engagement and the Graduation Approach, which is the first of its kind to be implemented in Jordan. The Graduation Approach targets families, through focusing on two members; one youth and one non-youth members, to help them find ways to grow and become self-reliant. Through several trainings, families are taught new interpersonal, professional, and financial skills to help them grow economically.



For years now, Tamam's family has been depending on food coupons and financial aid to make ends meet. “My two eldest sons were forced to stop their education to work. But finding work opportunities is becoming increasingly difficult,” Tamam added. The RYSE project, implemented by DRC in her area, in Madaba governorate, was a saving grace for Tamam and her family. “I enrolled with my son and our life has changed since then,” she said.

Through the graduation approach, and under the umbrella of the RYSE project, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) aims to help families in Madaba, East Amman and Karak, through a series of intensive skills trainings and technical training, along with increasing their financial literacy and giving them opportunities to become self-reliant. Tamam and her son have both attended several group trainings so far, that have changed the way they think. “We have learned to better communicate and express ourselves. We also learned how to set up our businesses and manage our finances,” said Tamam. “I learned so much from RYSE, so has my son.”

As part of the process of helping families graduate from need to self-reliance, Tamam received a business grant to help start her sewing business. “I bought two sewing machines and started working on designing and selling clothing items,” she said excitedly. Today, Tamam makes enough money to support her family with their basic needs and hopes to grow her business. “I want to own a workshop and expand my work, just like the old days in Dera” she said. Tamam is a part of a RYSE saving group, created to help families save and allocate the money they have. “This will help me buy new items that I need as well,” she finished with eyes filled with hope.

BLUMONT

The Protection of King Talal Dam: A lifeline for the community and the environment



For two agriculture engineers, the Protection of King Talal Dam through Labor-Intensive Activities project is a path out of unemployment and towards their dream profession.

On behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Blumont and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH are implementing the project to support water access and availability in Jordan, improve land conditions surrounding the dam, while also, provide job opportunities for the local community.

Sa'ada, a 29-year-old agriculture engineering graduate, has been in and out of jobs for the past 7 years and is hoping that this job opportunity can be the one that will help her find a steady and stable job.

Sa'ada has been volunteering and doing temporary work assignments since she graduated. Now, she is part of the cash for work program in the King Talal Dam protection project. She supervises a group of

12 Jordanian and Syrian young women and guides them on correct agricultural methods.

“This is a great experience for me, I am learning from the other engineers, and gaining leadership and management skills.” Said Sa'ada, adding that “It is also great because I get to get out of the house and do something I like after being unemployed for so long.”

20% of the work-for-cash employees are female, this number comes from a significant effort to include women in the community in manual labor jobs that they otherwise would be excluded from.

“The women who work with me are able to provide for their families, they are gaining new agricultural skills, and confidence that they can participate in any agricultural project. This project is also helping change how society views women working in agriculture, and making it more acceptable for women to do manual labor.”



“This is a great experience for me, I am learning from the other engineers, and gaining leadership and management skills.”

Qusai, a passionate farmer and a native to Jerash highlighted how protecting the dam can affect his community and the environment. “This project is very important for the environment, and the economic development for the area. Maintaining the dam and the plants surrounding it can improve bio diversity and attract more tourists. Becoming a tourist destination, can bring multiple sources of income for the residents in those areas.”

As an agricultural engineering graduate, Qusai is also hoping this project can be a stepping stone for long-term employment.

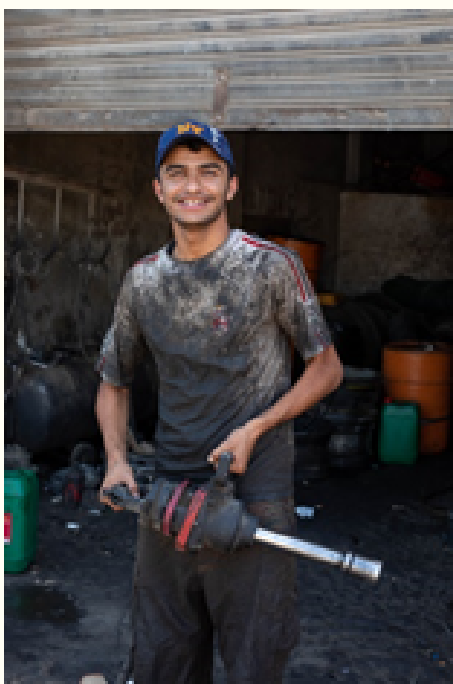
“I want to find a job with a steady income that I can depend on.” Said Qusai, “I spent a couple of months unemployed. There aren’t many job opportunities

in Jerash, so I was hopeful when I applied to work on this project.”

The project will provide temporary employment opportunities to 500 vulnerable Jordanians and Syrian refugees in areas surrounding the Zarqa River and King Talal Dam. Community members are hired to support work including installation of irrigation networks, tree plantings, sediment removal, and construction of flood mitigation structures. Blumont is also conducting outreach to increase local communities’ knowledge of soil erosion and flood mitigation in agricultural lands to help protect the area surrounding the dam.

FINN CHURCH AID

Voices from Jordan



GHASSAN ABU JAMA'A, is a 20-year-old man living in Sahab. After not completing high school, Ghassan struggled to find a decent job to provide for his family. “Ever since I was a kid, I dreamed about working with cars and having my own shop in order to have a stable job and support my family” Ghassan says. During the training sessions Ghassan started with FCA he found the premises just in time when he got his first grant payment. Now Ghassan is able to get a steady income that is actually increasing on a monthly basis. He had also hired an employee to help him at the tire shop.



” I began with my mother, the first female beekeeper in Jordan, with our little business, which was limited to family and neighbors. I was able to grow my project and register her business “. Iman said with the support she received from FCA through the Social and Economic Empowerment for Women project, Iman began her project (نواه) to create natural wax.

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC MIGRATION

ICMC Literacy Courses: An Educational Lifeline for Disadvantaged Women during the Pandemic.

The literacy courses are part of the International Catholic Migration Commission's (ICMC) protection activities in Mafrq and Irbid centers, which are open to all refugees and vulnerable host communities in Jordan and funded by the U.S. Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (BPRM).

Safa, a 35-year-old Jordanian woman, finished her schooling in the tenth grade, as unfortunately she had to interrupt her studies due to the financial situation of her family. Despite finishing part of her secondary education, Safa has always struggled to properly read and write in Arabic.

Safa got married and planned to start a family, but her first pregnancy was complicated. The couple tried to conceive a child during the last 15 years of their marriage but did not succeed. Safa has a younger sister who divorced when she was 24 years old and has a daughter from her marriage. However, she was unable to provide for her daughter emotionally and financially. As a result, Safa's sister resorted to asking Safa to look after her daughter, Nour.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Safa and her husband, Muhammad have struggled to maintain up-to-date with technology and virtual learning. They did not know how to handle Nour's new educational system and Safa had to seek support. Safa received a call from ICMC's Al-Mafrq Protection Center, inviting her to join the Adult Literacy courses remotely. With a strong and burning desire to study, Safa registered for the Arabic Literacy course.

In the 2020-2021 program year, 180 Jordanians out of 620 beneficiaries took adult literacy classes with ICMC to help them better manage their everyday lives and influence decision-making in their own homes.

As a result of the ICMC's Arabic Literacy course, Safa was one of the attendees who were able to improve her writing skills, and she is now able to properly educate Nour. "It would have been easy for me to give up, but I persisted. Now I have a skill that I can utilize to help my daughter." Safa summed up her experience with ICMC Literacy classes in these words.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Because of the inflation that had happened as a result of the Syrian crisis 2011, the shelter sector in 2012 was severely affected and consequently witnessed a huge jump regarding rent rates. According to the Jordan Response Plan (2020-2022), rent prices inflation started in 2012 and peaked in 2014, in addition to the fact that 70% of Jordanians are unable to afford adequate housing as they face poverty and deteriorating economic conditions side by side with Syrian refugees. The shelter situation before the crisis also was not well-aligned and was unable to satisfy demands. The sharp shortage in economic and natural resources has worsened the housing situation, too, especially during and after the invasion of Covid-19 pandemic due to the strict preventive measurements that had been forced by the government accordingly. All these circumstances together made it difficult for vulnerable communities.

in Jordan to live in adequate homes and have forced them to live in substandard homes. Habitat for Humanity Jordan has chosen to work on and develop the shelter sector based on the urgent need of shelter interventions in the country. It addresses substandard housing in an effort to provide poor people and vulnerable communities an accessible and affordable decent place to live worthy of human dignity. HFH Jordan works to improve people's living conditions by helping them build, repair, and rehabilitate their homes following green-building techniques that prepare homes for clean and sustainable energy solutions. Currently, HFH Jordan implements several projects in different regions: in the northern, middle, and southern parts of Jordan, such as:

The Middle East Response Crisis Initiative (MERC I Project):

As tens of thousands of refugees live outside refugee-camps, HFH Jordan tended to offer rehabilitation services to refugees and vulnerable local communities in East of Amman. Today, MERCI project provides shelter services to families' homes directly, besides CBOs, schools, and social care centers.

It also raises beneficiaries' awareness in terms of construction, green building techniques, and saving energy practices. HFH Jordan in coordination with selected contractors have rehabilitated 420 homes in FY 21 & 22, in addition to distributing brochures with awareness information. It also implemented 27 communal projects in different areas in Amman targeting local CBOs whose attendees are women, children, PWDs, and orphans of both refugees and Jordanians.

Revolving Fund program (RFP):

In light of a specific lifestyle in villages, families tend to have many children sharing a small two-room house. Lack of privacy would increase family tensions, especially when family members have no access to sufficient space to sleep, study, or do certain activities. Poor sanitary facilities also cause public and environmental health risks. Therefore, RFP is a project that is designed to offer loans to low-income Jordanian families outside Amman to build, repair, and rehabilitate their homes in a way that makes them enjoy their privacy and enable them to practice their daily activities normally. Currently, the project is implemented through 6 local CBOs who play the role of a mediator between HFH Jordan and beneficiaries. RFP also raises constructional awareness, provides several trainings for tenures, and builds partners capacities. During FY21 & FY22, HFH Jordan served 81 families through building 18 new houses, rehabilitating 14, and repairing 49 houses.

The Promoting Sustainable Households in Low-income Vulnerable Households and Communities across Jordan Project:

In partnership with HFH Nederland, HFH Jordan launched this project in February 2022. The project aims to encourage local communities to adopt green home-practices through building and retrofitting homes to reduce household energy consumption; More than 40 rehabilitated homes and 6 new green homes are planned to be built in different areas in Jordan.



Figure 1: Before and after the rehabilitation.



INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES

Voices from Jordan

Learning to Communicate While Far from Home – Fatima and Yasmeen’s Story (Names changed for privacy)

Fatima came to Jordan from Yemen, fleeing war and moving to a foreign country to start a new life. Leaving her home for a new place was challenging. However, Fatima had been injured in the conflict in Yemen and did not see a future for herself in her home country, so she made the difficult decision to come to Jordan.

Upon arriving in Amman, Fatima married. After settling into her new country, Fatima and her husband were happy to welcome a daughter, Yasmeen, into their family. However, the challenges they had survived in Yemen and the uncertainty of living in a foreign country led Fatima and her husband to keep their daughter at home, limiting her exposure to the outside world. Their anxieties and worries transferred to Yasmeen as they struggled to parent her away from the life they had known in Yemen.

Due to the challenges Yasmeen’s parents faced during the first years of their daughter’s life, her language skills did not progress as they should. At age three, Yasmeen was struggling to communicate with her parents. Not knowing what to do, Fatima took her daughter to an International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC)-supported clinic run by King Hussein Foundation Institute for Family Health (IFH) in Amman.

At the clinic, Yasmeen underwent screening, assessment, and diagnosis for potential impairments and disabilities. Specialists determined that she needed speech therapy. Yasmeen soon began rehabilitation sessions with the speech therapist.

Through an interactive, multisensory play approach and specialized language and speech interventions, in parallel with coaching for Yasmeen’s mother, IFH’s speech therapist worked to address the environmental barriers that had led to Yasmeen’s speech delays.

Fatima has seen an immense improvement in Yasmeen’s communication skills as a result of the rehabilitation therapy. Fatima herself also now has a better understanding of how to work with her daughter.

Fatima emphasized the importance of the services provided by IOCC and IFH for refugees with impairments and disabilities. As a Yemeni refugee, Fatima’s husband struggles to find formal work opportunities in Jordan. As a result, he frequently has to change jobs and does not have a steady income. The income that he does have barely covers the family’s basic needs and would not be enough to pay for rehabilitation services, such as the speech therapy, that Yasmeen needs.

However, with support from the US Department of State’s Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), Yasmeen is getting the expert help that she needs to engage with her family and her community. And Fatima too receives the support she needs to better care for her daughter. Through IOCC’s partnership with PRM and IFH, this family is forging ahead into a brighter future.



JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE JORDAN

JRS FESTIVAL OF ENCOUNTER - Celebrating diversity and intercultural dialogue

The first Festival of Encounter (مهرجان اللقاء) organized by JRS Jordan on Friday 24th June, brought together over 500 people, all coming from different countries such as Yemen, Eritrea, Somalia, Syria, Iraq, Sudan, Palestine and Jordan.

The Festival aimed to celebrate the diversity of the refugee communities JRS works with, and that enriches our Jordanian society. This day of celebration wanted to portray the cultural and artistic expressions of all refugee communities JRS serves, accompanies and advocates for, and it gave light and voice particularly to the non-Syrian refugee communities whose stories and presence are often unseen and unspoken.

At the event, members of refugee communities were showcasing traditional dresses and items from their countries. Visitors could also enjoy a bazaar of handmade products, traditional food, and various activities for children. Refugees and visitors danced on traditional songs from Syria, Somalia, Yemen, Sudan. “It is amazing to see these children from so many different countries sitting next to each other and playing together” says Sajeda Yousef from JRS, one of organizers of the Festival. “It was also touching to see people from Somalia, Sudan and other countries dancing at the dabke played by a Syrian group, and everyone simply enjoying dancing together on the rhythms and songs of so many different countries”. At night, the audience got close to the stage to enjoy the live performances of Iraqi music, Levant songs, theatre, afro-dance, Zumba from the Jesuit Center Dance group (TJDG), the Sudanese Band for traditional Music, K-Pop from Aptopus, and rap from D.W.A.

The performers were from Iraq, Jordan, Sudan, Syria, Egypt, Somalia, Eritrea, Mozambique, Germany, and Italy.



The comments of the audience were overwhelmingly positive. One guest from Jordan said that he felt like he wasn't in Jordan, but that he was traveling through all these different countries. Another guest from Jordan said “I didn't know there are refugees from these countries in our society!! I discovered something new”.

Silvia Mazzocchin, Communications Manager for JRS, says: “We hope that the great result of the festival can be a positive message and sign for our society, to consider diversity as an enrichment and not as a barrier. And also the positive result of the festival reinforces our commitment to the work and efforts we're doing at JRS, to make everyone feel home, accepted and respected, and to give a voice to all the communities of refugees living in Jordan”.



Supporting Mothers and Their Well being

10 years after the start of the Syria crisis, over 700,000 refugees remain displaced in Jordan. Families fled from Syria, leaving their homes, where generations had established lives. This creates immense economic, social, emotional, and physical challenges for families. Many feel hopeless without mental strategies to cope. Medair's social protection program provides unconditional cash transfers to vulnerable Jordanian families and refugees. Social protection officers give mental health and psychosocial support, assisting families to develop positive coping mechanisms and life skills.

For one Syrian mother, having tools to manage mental health was essential for improving her well-being. Zara, a widow, is a Syrian refugee who came to Jordan in 2012 with her four children. Like most refugees in Jordan, she lived in an urban area and not in a camp. The only support she received was a food voucher. Despondent and worried about her children's safety, health, and well-being, Zara cried every day. In 2021, Medair was referred to Zara and contacted Zara. After a conducting an assessment, Zara was enrolled in Medair's social protection program. She received cash for five months. Paired with a social protection officer, Amneh, they worked together to set life goals, develop coping tools, and build her self-esteem.

While the cash that Zara received was invaluable, Zara longed to work, be successful, be positive, and stop crying. Zara wanted to be free from her crippling anxiety and depression. Amneh helped her to create a case plan and referred her to external services. She didn't understand the physical and emotional impact of poor mental health on a person, refusing when referred to see a psychia-

trist. However, she felt comfortable working with Amneh on techniques for deep breathing and positive thinking to control her anxiety. When her sessions with Amneh ended, she explained that her case manager felt like her support and her family. She felt changed. Zara found a job and works three days a week.

Noura came to Jordan in 2012, fleeing Syria with her family, including her young daughter. As a young Syrian refugee and a mother, receiving psychosocial support led to a major change in her life. Noura and her family enrolled in Medair's social protection program, receiving cash assistance for five months. Amneh, Medair's Social Protection Officer, assessed the family's needs, working with them to set goals and develop coping mechanisms. Medair's cash assistance allowed the family to buy food, pay utility bills, and buy medication for the father who has a medical condition.

When Amneh began working with the family and arrived at their home, Noura was very shy. Her daughter found the first two sessions with the social protection officer frightening, as she was unaccustomed to strangers. Noura lived in Jordan for almost 10 years and lacked the confidence to leave her home, go outdoors or meet other people. Amneh noticed that this affected her daughter. When they worked on goal setting, Noura's first task was to take her daughter to the park.



A Mental Health and Psychosocial Support session conducted for women by a Medair Case worker.

As Amneh worked with the family, Noura began improving her skills, she started training and is determined to complete her education. She hopes her daughter will also finish her education in the future. As Amneh reflects on working with Noura, exclaiming that Noura is almost unrecognizable and exudes confidence not held previously. Amneh says, “The people we work with have a lot of problems, stress, often live in poor condition, and a lot have lost their family. They need to know how to reduce their tension. They need the skills to live.”

Zara and Noura are a few of the many cases in Jordan where the person may not understand the emotional and psychological challenges caused by their experiences, especially as refugees or vulnerable families. These cases continually remind Medair staff of the cruelties of poverty, displacement, and conflict.

Ali Almaany, Medair’s Social Protection Project Manager, explains, “Problems are like an ice burg. They [people] don’t see the long-term effect of the negative coping mechanisms.”

COVID-19 exacerbated existing inequities and the protracted nature of the Syria crisis has left many in limbo, uprooted from their homes with a lot of uncertainty. Medair provides complimentary services that address multi-dimensional needs. Medair’s programming in Jordan has expanded over the years, meeting growing needs with a holistic approach to health, while acknowledging an individual’s overall well-being requires more than access to health care alone.



Amneh, Medair Case Manager Officer, talking to Noura (far left) and her family during an assessment visit at their home in Amman.

TERRE DES HOMMES LAUSANNE

Basel's Story: "I Want to Learn, Grow and Support My Family"

10-year-old Basel* lives with his mother, younger brother and grandmother in Mafraq, Jordan. The little boy has no memory of their journey from Syria to Jordan as he was only 10 months old when they escaped the violent conflict in 2014. Having left Syria in a hurry, the family took only some of their clothes. Before being transported to Jordan; they took shelter in the wilderness for almost three months, while images of destruction never left their memory.

The family adapted and considered Jordan as their new home. At the age of six, Basel started going to school, **"Although the school is close to my house, the teachers there do not care for students. All we want is for you to teach us and take care of us,"** he says. In 2020, the schools were closed, people were not allowed out of their homes and the few job opportunities his mother relied on were lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was time they took extreme measures in order to survive.

Basel started working on the streets to collect metal scraps and sell them, **"Remote education was worse than the school itself. The school did not care if we attended on normal days, imagine how the situation became with online learning,"** Basel bluntly says as he justifies why work became a priority for him: **"I want to support my mother—I want to be a man. Our need for money pushed me to sell empty soda cans."**

In March 2022, he met Terre des hommes (TDH) staff. **"Basel is an intelligent and responsible child. All he needed was a caring environment where he can learn, socialize and interact with others. After a few visits to his house, Basel left work and enrolled in our center where he participated in different activities,"** says Bashar Sharafat, a case manager at TDH. **"After meeting Bashar, I learned that I should use this time to learn and improve my skills. I do want to learn but the school I go to is not supportive,"** Basel explains.

The young boy is currently spending more time with his brother, he helps with chores and tries to improve his skills, **"I want to learn English and become an electrical engineer in the future; just like my uncle,"** he says. Basel wishes to fix what the conflict has destroyed in Syria someday so that his family can return to their home.

The protection project began in 2021 and has been funded by the UN OCHA Jordan Humanitarian Fund (JHF) to provide services through inclusive case management and specialized Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS) to Syrian and Jordanian children exposed to the risk of, or directly exposed to, child protection concerns, while strengthening child protection systems in Irbid, Karak and Mafraq Governorates in Jordan. So far, the project has been supporting over 470 people, including 439 children.



"I want to support my mother—I want to be a man. Our need for money pushed me to sell empty soda cans. sessions"

MERCY CORPS

When scrap materials meet innovative minds

For thousands of children born and raised in Refugee Camps, the barren land is the only backyard they have ever known, and the situation is even more difficult for children with disabilities (CWDs). According to the [UNHCR statistics](#), in Azraq Camp, an average of 25 children are born every week, all of whom have never left the camp and have no idea what life is like outside the fence.

Children's limited life experiences in Village 5 have an impact on their understanding of the world, making the educational process even more challenging. In an interview with [Middle East Eye](#), Walaa Abu Sheira, a field officer with Mercy Corps, said, "When we assess children and they see a picture of stairs or a tree, they don't know what that is."

In order to support all children's development, including those with disabilities, capitalize on curiosity children exhibit which is essential to enable learning, and broaden their perspective on the world, Mercy Corps Jordan, with funding from UNICEF, created a new interactive accessible playground inside one of the camp's schools. This is only part of Mercy Corps' ongoing efforts to support children with disabilities and ensure their inclusion in all activities.

Ahmad is an eight-year-old boy with cerebral palsy who uses a wheelchair. Asked by [BBC Arabic](#) about his thoughts on the playground, Ahmad said, *"I've never been to a playground before, and this is my first experience ever. I was overjoyed when I saw it because now I can play with other kids."*

What makes this playground unique is that it is the first of its kind in Jordan, built entirely from upcycled materials at a cost close to zero, and serves all children including children with disabilities. Each game was designed to assist the child in improving his/her physical, intellectual, and academic abilities. The Fishing game, for instance, helps to improve gross motor skills, eye-hand coordination, fine motor skills, palm's muscle strength, vestibular sensation and balance. Moreover, it helps children improve their concentration, figure ground skills, spatial relation skills, color discrimination, counting, and numeracy.

Furthermore, all of the playground's games and stations were created at a Mercy Corps adaptation workshop in Azraq Camp. Inside this workshop, which is run by Syrian volunteers under the supervision of Mercy Corps technical staff, advanced problem-solving skills are combined with creative use of scrap materials and leadership skills to offer tools, equipment, and smart solutions for all children.

Since 2008, Mercy Corps Inclusive Education program has worked to ensure access to equitable learning opportunities and works with parents and community members to raise the awareness of disability and the right of children with disabilities to education. Our holistic approach provides Jordanian and Syrian children with disabilities with personalized support, trains and builds the capacity of teachers to identify children with disabilities and provide them with the needed support.

