

# JORDAN INGO FORUM NEWSLETTER



IRC COVID-19 vaccine campaign in Za'atari

## September Update

### JIF SECRETARIAT

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Over the last several months, Jordan has adapted to the continuously shifting environment in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Communities throughout the Kingdom have exhibited strength and resilience in adjusting to these shifts, which include remote learning, virtual employment opportunities, and accessing services and assistance through different modalities.

In addition, INGOs have adapted to the changing context to ensure no one is left behind. The Jordan INGO Forum (JIF) has strived to enable its 59 members to help people in need and improve the lives of vulnerable populations in Jordan. Through information sharing, coordination, advocacy, and representation, the Forum has sought to elevate the voices of vulnerable communities throughout the Kingdom and empower them throughout all aspects of policy and programming.

This September 2021 issue of the JIF newsletter exemplifies the commitment Forum members have demonstrated towards continuing service delivery to those most in need in a changing global, regional, and national environment. The following contributions highlight the valuable work that JIF members have accomplished from March to August 2021.

# ACTED

## *Reusable Mask Production*

The COVID-19 outbreak has highly impacted local economies in Jordan, resulting in increased job insecurity, especially for more vulnerable groups like women. To respond to this growing concern and mitigate the virus from spreading, ACTED implemented a reusable mask production project in Ramtha and Sahel Horan rural areas between October 2020 and July 2021.

With funding support from GIZ under their “Waste to positive energy” programming, ACTED reduced the impacts of the pandemic, including mitigating:

- 1) the economic and mental strain from loss of employment and income streams by providing short-term employment opportunities for vulnerable women;
- 2) the negative impacts on the environment, such as littering, by producing reusable masks as an alternative to disposable ones; and
- 3) the exposure and spread of the COVID-19 virus by distributing masks for the local population supported under GIZ projects.

To facilitate the training and production works, ACTED collaborated with the Community Based Organization (CBO) Al Takaful, which runs three vocational training workshops equipped with existing sewing workspaces and machinery. ACTED hired a total of 36 vulnerable Jordanian and Syrian women with sewing and tailoring skills, including two women with disabilities. Through their combined skills, motivation, and dedication, they produced a total of 43,788 reusable fabric masks.

One of the main added-values of this intervention was the technical trainings for the female workers to complement their hands-on experience. The training had a 97% satisfaction rating and enhanced the women’s sewing and tailoring skills, as well as their teamwork skills in order to strengthen their employability.

In fact, three of the temporary workers are undergoing the hiring process with Al Takaful to obtain sustainable employment beyond the project. This included Raghda, hired as a tailor supervisor to provide trainings and oversee production activities, as well as Dalida and Manal, who have been preselected as tailors for Al Takaful’s planned production line expansion.



*“This experience enhanced my skills in team and workshop management, task assignment, team communication and planning for different stages within the production line.”*  
**Raghda, 42-year Jordanian woman**

# AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

## *Al-Shabab Program*

Last year AFSC launched Al-Shabab Program. Since then, 60 participants have been part of a learning journey consisting of 6 stages through which youth gained first-hand experience on how to learn, plan and take action to have a positive impact in solving problems in their communities.

At the end of stage 3, on April 16th, 2021, AFSC organized an online “Community Issue Fair.” This event provided an introduction about the learning journey, M&E preliminary findings, and the youth groups working in different locations in Amman and Zarqa presented the community research they had worked on.

Lastly, there was a discussion activity, “World Café”, consisting of breakout rooms in which the audience discussed with the youth and facilitators ideas related to the issues presented. The event concluded with recommendations and suggestions from experts about the youth’s community research presentation. After three months of hard work, on July 16th, a “Solution Fair” was organized in the Haya Cultural Center to showcase youth’s proposed initiatives and solutions to the problems previously identified.

The group in Russaifeh identified extreme addiction to technology and its possible negative impact on the youth, and decided to develop a booklet for parents to increase the time spent with their children. The group in Zarqa chose to address the issue of domestic violence by providing free family protection services and consultations for those in need. Considering that Sahab is an industrial area, the youth in this area aim to reduce economic rights violations by providing free law consultations and legal services for people facing these problems. Lastly, the group in Khalda wants to increase self-awareness and appreciation within the youth by creating a smart PDF magazine that would answer many questions youth may feel embarrassed to ask in other spaces.

Overall, the audience was impressed with the participant's creative solutions. By implementing these solutions, youth participants are expected to improve their decision-making skills and civic engagement in their communities.

*By implementing these solutions, participants are expected to improve their decision-making skills and civic engagement in their communities.*



# BLUMONT

## *Opportunity Starts at Home*

When Abeer, a 36-year-old Jordanian woman, was widowed at a young age, she suddenly had four children depending entirely on her. With a passion for pickling, she saw an opportunity to take control of her family's financial future.

Abeer knew how to make a great product but struggled to build her business due to the fees and process of registration and licensing. Registration is an important step to bringing home-based businesses in line with government regulations and bringing business owners into the formal Jordanian economy.

"Before registering my business, I was worried and always on my toes," said Abeer. "I was instantly relieved when Blumont took my hand and helped me launch my business properly."

With Blumont's support through the UNHCR-funded Jordan Livelihoods Project, Abeer was able to get a license and register at the Ministry of Industry and Trade, enabling her to trade with other businesses and diversify her markets.

"I now supply my products to supermarkets, restaurants, and dairy shops as they refuse to deal with food suppliers that are not registered. Understanding the law made me more confident," she said.

*"I dream of growing my business and increasing my profit so I can pursue my education," Omamah said.*

Home-based businesses (HBBs) play an important role in Jordan's economy. Outside of the public sector, micro- and small enterprises, including HBBs, are a primary driver of income and growth. The Jordan Livelihoods Project is helping entrepreneurs build skills and expand their markets, while bringing their businesses into the formal economy.

Since 2019, Blumont has helped more than 220 Jordanian and Syrian refugee-owned HBBs become formally registered and/or licensed in Jordan. In the first year of the project, Blumont registered a Syrian-owned home-based business, the very first to successfully do so in Jordan. With support, Syrian refugees continue to make progress, including Omamah, a 19-year old entrepreneur who registered her accessory business in 2021.

In addition to legal support, the program provides HBB owners with training on operations, product development and creative design, marketing, financial literacy, and customer service.

Ola, who has been sewing tassels on the sides of Kofiehs ever since she can remember, was able to combine her creativity with her new business acumen to expand her home-based sewing business. Ola turned her passion into a source of income, and with a seed grant to purchase materials and a connection to Souq Fann, a digital merchandise shop, she is reaching new customers across the kingdom.



# COLLATERAL REPAIR PROJECT

Who would have thought that something out of a Hollywood movie or teenage nightmare would manifest into a fantastic fundraising initiative? But it was precisely this that our own Rob Hamilton could achieve as he crossed the Atlantic Ocean on a solo row.

The first time Rob saw a rowing boat was when he was only 18 years old, but little did he know that he would be rowing solo across the Atlantic a few years later to raise money for one of his favorite charities, Collateral Repair Project (CRP). Having worked at CRP in 2018, Rob says that he saw how much can be done with so little. In his own words, he states, 'It was truly commendable that the money was going to where it was needed most and not to paying staff. The day-to-day work made a difference, and you could see the change you're actively making in people's lives.'

After being discharged from the army due to a knee injury, Rob knew he had to show the world that no matter what life throws at you, there is always a reason to get back up and survive. And this is what led him to the difficult solo row challenge that made him lose his mind, literally.

Rowing, Rob tells us, was always at the front of his mind even while he attended university. Having studied and worked in the Middle East, Rob developed a love and passion for the region and its people. But he knew that he had to return to Windsor in the UK to train for the row. It was something he had always wanted to do and knew he could not give up.

Preparing for the row took about two years, and Rob kept his spirits up by understanding that this was all worth it and the money would go to helping the needy. So where are the gorillas and zombies, you ask? Read on!



*The race began in the Canary Islands, and as I walked up to the boat, it hit me like a bolt of lightning. OMG, am I really going to do this? I could feel my heart jumping out of my chest and tears filling my eyes. But I moved on and forced myself to sit in the boat.*

The race was an unsupported race with no help at all, and everything on board was all that you could have. So, Rob took food rations that would last 85 days and attached a water filter to the boat to filter ocean water and make it drinkable. And so, Rob was off, and there was no looking back now!

So where are the gorillas, you ask? Hallucinations started for Rob between days 5 – 10. Rob believes it was the combination of heat, exhaustion, and night rowing that may have triggered this.

*I saw three human figures at one stage and asked them for directions. Thinking back, this was creepy, and I am glad that I could move on from that, but the hallucinations did not stop there. I saw zombie hands coming out of the water, a cow standing in the ocean, and a gorilla on top of the boat who offered advice. At that moment, I believed this was a bad sign or omen. Looking back, I must have been losing my mind!*

*To see land and color was something we all take for granted. Yet, for over 50 days, all I could see was blue—the ocean and sky. I think the row brought me closer to the real refugee crisis. The most significant comparison was that there were so many unknowns, and you do not know what is next. But an important difference is that this was a choice for me. I got into the water of my own free will, and refugees do not have this choice.*

# LA CHAÎNE DE L'ESPOIR

*The Stories of Ariam and Rashmiah*

In 2016, during the Syrian conflict, Ariam and Rashmiah's family fled to Jordan. The scale of the war was insane, and its consequences unpredictable. Living in their hometown of Homs, marked by widespread violence, constant shelling and endless shooting, had become unbearable.

Four-year-old Ariam and two-year-old Rashmiah were born into a lovely Syrian family of 8 (6 children and parents) and have since lived in a small apartment in Zaatari. Ariam and Rashmiah's pregnancy and delivery went smoothly. None of their other siblings has any medical problems.

In April 2021, during a routine medical visit to the Emirati hospital of Mafraq, the paediatrician who examined Ariam and Rashmiah found an abnormality in their heart rhythms and referred them to a cardiologist Dr Fu'ad. They were then referred in May 2021 to Dr. Imad Khreisat, a local pediatric cardiologist and partner of La Chaîne de l'Espoir, and diagnosed with a PDA (Patent Ductus Arteriosus), needing closed heart surgery.

Thanks to the pediatric cardiac surgery mission organized by La Chaîne de l'Espoir funded by the European Union - Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid, Rashmiah and Ariam were operated on by a Spanish team led by Dr. Tomasa Centella in June 2021. After two days, the two sisters were doing very well and can now continue their lives.

"Thank goodness there are humanitarian medical missions in Jordan to save our child," Rashmiah and Ariam's mother said with tears in her eyes.

From March 1 to July 31, 2021, the Chaîne de l'Espoir supported 265 vulnerable children and young adults living with cardiac impairment and 363 with orthopedic impairment, having had access to timely and adequate diagnosis on top of medico-surgical care. 1118 beneficiaries received health services from CDE since the start of the project on October 1st, 2020.

Thanks to the European Union's funds - Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid- that the Chain of Hope can implement its surgical programs.

*"Thank goodness there are humanitarian medical missions in Jordan to save our child," Rashmiah and Ariam's mother said with tears in her eyes.*



## HELPAge

Through our experience in working on the inclusion of older people and their participation in older people programs, older people tell us that they value being treated fairly with respect and dignity, making their own decisions, having their voices heard, participating in their own and others' development, and having access to services that respond to their different needs.

Yet for many older people realizing this is a struggle – from making decisions for themselves within the family and going about their lives according to their own values and preferences, to ensuring they are included and able to influence change within social and political spheres at local, national, and international levels.

We want to support older people to exercise their right, to speak as they wish and to have their voices heard and their issues included in laws, policies, programmes, and services. Therefore, HelpAge International developed the “Voice Framework” to think more systematically about what Voice work means to us as an organization and to help us to think about how we strengthen this area. We looked at what work is already taking place that we can define as Voice work.

Voice is about older people's ability to claim their rights, to make choices and to participate meaningfully in decision-making in all parts of their lives, including the personal, family, social and political. It is also about older people's ability to challenge ageism and inequality. At HelpAge International, voice is often used as an umbrella term to capture the areas of participation, empowerment, agency, autonomy, and accountability.

Voice has intrinsic value. The opinions we hold, the decisions we make, and the actions we take constitute a significant part of who we are. Having choice and agency in relation to these is central to



our dignity, wellbeing, and sense of self-worth, and to a rights-based approach to aging. Voice also has instrumental value. Including older people's voices in development and decision-making processes that affect them can lead to better outcomes, including inclusive institutions, improved access to and quality of public services, and positive human development.

HelpAge International seeks to build the capacities of all humanitarian actors by engaging them in various workshops that promote the concept of integrating older people in their humanitarian policies and interventions and enhance the voice activities of older men and women.

Recently in July, HelpAge International held three workshops on: “HelpAge Voice Framework” in Arabic, English and Russian due to its keenness to create an effective discussion space in the local languages of members and partners. Through these workshops, HelpAge International seeks to introduce basic concepts related to working in the field of voice and to highlight HelpAge's definition of voice, and to allow participants to have their thoughts on what empowerment means/does not mean as well as presenting HelpAge's voice framework to older people and discussing the various elements of this framework including: identity, power and contextual factors affecting the work in the field of voice.

The participants had the opportunity to exchange experiences and learn more about work practices in the field of enhancing the voice of older people in addition to sharing some lessons learned and best practices across various regions around the world.

# HUMANITY & INCLUSION

Hariri, 33-years-old, is a Syrian refugee who arrived in Jordan in 2013 to have his left leg and right arm amputated as a result of a war injury. Due to Hariri's health condition, he wasn't able to work. "I was a good electrician back in Syria, and now I'm spending every day at home doing nothing. That's when the depression started to take over."

One day, in mid-2019, a friend of his came across an advertisement by one of HI's local partners on opportunities for persons with disabilities who wish to earn a living and improve their socio-economic status and told him about it.

"Inclusive Employment in Jordan" is one of HI's projects in Jordan funded by the Drosos Foundation since 2018. The project aims to support the employment of persons with disabilities by improving the accessibility of the work environment and training persons with disabilities.

Hariri gained more awareness about employment and developed his personnel profile and plan, only after his 3rd meeting with the project team.

Hariri said, "I attended a course called "Industrial Control and I was able to complete it successfully with high grades. After this course, I was able to define all the control panel elements. I'm now able to design industrial panels and select the elements between MCB, switches, timers, sensors, contractors, and overload.

My instructor even encouraged me to attend the advanced course, as HI agreed to provide full support as it will help me find a decent job after.

Although I have one arm amputated, I faced no challenges in holding and controlling the equipment. I practiced working with one arm and now I have built up my confidence. I was able to fix all the electrical issues at my house and even started doing maintenance work at the neighbors for extra income.

I'm very happy now, I feel that I can overcome any challenges.

I would like to thank Humanity & Inclusion and all of those who supported me to reach this level."



*"I'm very happy now, I feel that I can overcome any challenges."*



# ICMC

The International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) supported 27,500 individuals in need through its partnership with the US Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM) in the governorates of Irbid, Mafrqa, Zarqa, Jarash and Ajloun, over its 2020/2021 program year.

ICMC has been working with partners to stand in solidarity with refugees, whom are concerned about their future, as well as the host communities that have supported thousands of refugees fleeing violence over the past decade.

ICMC has continued to provide two safe spaces in Mafrqa and Irbid to protect and assist the most vulnerable refugees and the host community members, including children, women, men and people with disabilities. The program focuses on strengthening the protection system, promoting inclusion, and advancing gender equality.

As a result of the global pandemic, and to overcome its related challenges, ICMC has ensured the continuous delivery of its services for those most in-need. Accordingly, it supports project participants to cope with psychological strains that are caused by the health crisis. To do so, it conducts courses and activities both remotely and face to face, where it's possible.

ICMC carried out a series of activities including youth empowerment groups, positive parenting courses, intergenerational groups, local community groups, adult literacy, psychological support, child-friendly spaces, life skills courses, and men and boys courses. These activities aim to improve access to prevention and response services for people at risk. In addition, ICMC aims to empower participants in overcoming their social risks and economic vulnerabilities. Throughout its protection activities, ICMC has reached 12,864 individuals.

ICMC continued its Livelihood activities, which provide individuals with professional vocational training opportunities, enabling them to develop a sustainable revenue stream to support their families and increase their financial independence by acquiring skills useful in the Jordanian job market. As a result of conducting the vocational training, 240 participants have benefited from ICMC livelihoods courses.

Through its Basic Needs program, 1,785 vulnerable families benefitted from ICMC's Cash for Rent, Multi-Purpose and Winterization Cash Assistances. Furthermore, 6,095 families have been reached by ICMC community outreach team.

Moreover, ICMC continues to manage and closely follow-up on sensitive cases, regardless of gender, age, nationality, or religion. During this period, ICMC referred 3,054 cases both internally to its Protection, Livelihoods and Basic Needs services and activities and externally to other specialized organizations.

Omar, a Syrian refugee has shared his experience participating in the welding course at the vocational training center in Irbid. "I would have never been able to pay for the course on my own. The course was an opportunity to learn more – hence, to earn more. It has been a great experience for me!" Omar explained.

Speaking passionately about his participation in the program, Omar shared, "There are a number of additional advantages of taking the course. We meet new people, engage with coworkers, become more open, and establish a social life." Following successful completion of the vocation training and acquiring new skills, Omar is considering marriage and starting a family. Such success stories demonstrate ICMC's longer-term impact on people in need and their improved resilience.

# IM SWEDISH DEVELOPMENT PARTNER

## Early Intervention Procedures for Persons with Visual and Mild Mental Impairments in Zarqa

The research – which concentrated on the city of Zarqa – found that there is a significant shortage of government centres for early intervention for persons with disabilities, as there is no centre concerned with providing early intervention services for persons with visual impairment, despite 'vision' being one of the most prevalent functional difficulties (impairments) in the Kingdom. It accounts for six per cent of all impairments, and also constitutes the highest percentage among other impairments (functional difficulties) between the ages 5-9, at 2.2 per cent in 2015.

The research focused on persons with impairments in the city of Zarqa, who make up 11.6 per cent of the city, 6.3 per cent of whom are persons with visual impairment.

The policy paper presents important results by analysing the data obtained through holding a set of in-depth interviews with government agencies and independent authorities, as well as a focus group discussion held in the presence of parents of children with visual impairment and minor mental impairment in Zarqa. In addition, the research features a review of secondary sources, which include books and existing research on early intervention, in order to identify the procedures followed to provide early intervention services in Jordan, specifically in Zarqa.

This paper presents a set of facts related to the reality of early intervention services in Jordan, specifically in Zarqa on early intervention units located in the city and the programmes applied therein particularly for people with visual and mild mental impairments and also highlights the role of parents in the success of the early intervention experiment.

According to research findings, it was concluded that there are a set of challenges facing the application of early intervention procedures and programmes for people with visual and mental disabilities in Zarqa, the most prominent being:

§ Poor early intervention services in the city available to families due to their lack of knowledge about the existence of such centres (although there are few) in the city.

§ The modest experience of early intervention service providers, as the families confirmed that their children's experience had failed in these centres.

§ University education for working cadres lacks "experience."

§ Difficulty accessing early intervention centres.

§ The high cost of enrolment in private centres.

# IRC

## Mahmoud's Story

"I took Pfizer vaccine last month at the IRC health clinic in Za'atari camp. I felt relieved and grateful; all the stress that COVID did to our life went away. Everyone should take it," Mahmoud said.

The 52-year-old father was forced to flee his hometown in Daraa and headed to Za'atari camp, located in northern Jordan, in 2013. "I live with my wife and three sons, and I have two other sons who are married and live next to us in the camp," Mahmoud said.

The IRC has been delivering a package of essential Primary Health Care, including basic reproductive health services at Za'atari refugee camp since 2016 through a primary level health care facility. "I visit the clinic regularly since 2016 and having checkups and getting medication for diabetes, Asthma, and cholesterol," Mahmoud said. "What kept me coming to this clinic since 2016 is how the team treats us, and the services are excellent. They care about us."

Mahmoud explained that during the checkups, the clinic team tests his blood sugar and blood pressure and conducts general checkups, and then he gets his medications.

"COVID affected our life, there is a lot of restrictions in movement, but I'm committed to these restrictions because I believe that these are for our health and safety," Mahmoud said.

Mahmoud has three grandchildren, and he is spending most of his time with them.

"Akram, who's two years old, is my favorite one. At the beginning of the pandemic, I was not able to see him," Mahmoud said. "I hope my children and my grandchildren have a better future."

*"What kept me coming to this clinic since 2016 is how the team treats us, and the services are excellent. They care about us."*



# ISLAMIC RELIEF

## Rehabilitation and Maintenance of Homes

As part of IRJ's interventions to support Palestinian families in Jerash/ Gaza camp, Islamic Relief Jordan has completed the rehabilitation and maintenance works for 17 houses to improve the living conditions of the targeted families who spent years in suffering and deprivation, especially during the winter season where they face critical problems such as leaking roofs and water seepage through walls, in addition to humidity and unavailability of the sanitation system.

The construction lasted for 4 months despite the fact that COVID-19 delayed the work on the several times and finished with impressive results that changed the lives of the targeted families. Through the generous fund from Green lane Masjid (GLM) & IRUK office, IRJ team managed to re-build a new house for Abu Khaled's family, the family that used to live in a tent since they could not afford to build or to pay house rent.

Abu Khalid said "We used to live in a rented house but after I lost my job we struggled to pay the rent. My family and I were forced to leave the house to a small tent. Some good people donated with this small land for me to build a house on it but I have no money to do so. We have been living in this tent for years. You can't imagine life during winter, the cold is scary. Mud is everywhere."

Abu Khaled used to be the breadwinner for his family until his health condition prevented him from work. The family relies on the money they get as daily workers in farms during olive harvests.

"This house means everything for me. You (IR) have enhanced our well-being. Right now, we feel like any other normal family. The whole situation that we went through has affected my children in different ways; it has affected their health, their academics, and their psychosocial wellbeing but now we feel safe. Al HamduliAllh, there are no words that can describe what we feel now. I would like to thank each of you including donors, IR, engineers, and workers. Jazakom Allah khairn."

Manal's family is another Palestinian family who benefited from this project. Manal said " I am a mother of four children. Losing my husband has put added burden to my life. It is so hard to move forward amidst the bad circumstances that we have been living for years in this camp. My husband left me with the children in a tiny house consists of one room, one bathroom and small kitchen without any source of income, there are two rooms in the basement but it needs full maintenance. The general condition of the house is miserable. My husband's health condition got worse due to the high-level of humidity and the lack of ventilation in the house before he passed away. I feel afraid that I could lose my oldest child for the same reason. She is suffering from asthma. And her health condition is critical. She has to stay in clean air and good ventilation".

*Manal said " Al  
HamduliAllah, What  
Islamic Relief has done  
for me is such a miracle.  
The team visited my  
house and assessed the  
situation."*



# JESUIT RELIEF SERVICES

## *A Journey to Yemen through Flavors and Stories*

The table in the kitchen of Gehad is covered with colours and flavours... red meat, green lettuce, white garlic, colourful spices. She starts washing, chopping, mixing, and finally all the ingredients sit together in a pot, simmering on the fire. Gehad is bringing us back to her own country, Yemen. The flavours and smells of Saltah, a traditional Yemeni dish, accompany her story, while she tells us how she arrived to Jordan, with her husband Esam, her son Ra'fet and her daughter Raghad.

"The political parties in Yemen were forcibly recruiting children as young as the age of fourteen to train them to fight in the civil war." Gehad starts telling us. "At that time, I started to notice a change in my son's way of thinking. He started to become interested in the conflict-related affairs in our country. Out of fear that my son may join the armed groups and be made a suicide bomber, we fled to Jordan in 2018". The arrival to Jordan wasn't easy. "One of the most difficult things a refugee faces is the dire financial circumstances. Refugees constantly struggle to provide for themselves and their families due to the lack of work opportunities. To be able to work requires a working permit, which a refugee would face many barriers to obtain, such as initially acquiring a residency permit. This additionally contributes to refugees struggling to afford high rent prices." Her husband started working in a restaurant making local desserts, and she helped him preparing them. "We tried hard to make it through the hardships together as one family," she says.

While we cook together, her husband shows us a pottery pot called Al-Haradah, from Yemen, necessary for the cooking of Saltah. Her son arrives with a tray full of large Yemeni flatbreads, that a neighbour prepared. The little Raghad plays around her mum while we talk and cook together.

Gehad continues with her story. "We started to learn new skills in the hopes of improving our living conditions. I signed up for a sewing course in one of the local centres, where I learned how to sew curtains, bed sheets, and even face masks," she tells. "When the corona outbreak began, I used my new skill to create and sell face masks. I sold simple designs to a Quran centre and then I helped to teach my friends and neighbours to make the face masks as well. Afterwards, I progressed to sewing clothes and curtains."

Gehad realized also how important it was for her son to learn English. She felt she couldn't help him, so she decided to enrol in the English courses offered by JRS. "After completing the English course, I was able to share what I learned and teach my son English." she says. Her progress and achievements encouraged her husband to study at JRS as well. "I also participated in the career coaching program. I learned how to create a CV and power point presentations. We got the opportunity to design a slideshow and it was fun to work as a group with my classmates. I also learnt important information on jobs, job opportunities, and the labour market" Gehad says. Through the courses she learned also about anxiety, depression, and other psychological aspects. Her son was able to join the community centre at JRS and improve his educational performance.

The Saltah is ready. We sit on the ground together around the delicious dishes. The last taste of Yemen that Gehad offers us is tea. Sweet, spicy... and warm, that is how we feel after this day of sharing, while she tells us that "in the light of difficult circumstances, our participation in JRS marked a notable turning point in our lives. Refugees travel to Jordan to seek asylum and to find better living opportunities. In our case, JRS provided us with the support and help we needed and ultimately changed our lives."

## MECI

MECI strives to create the right conditions for the children and youth to thrive in, as well as providing them with sustainable education which extends beyond books and classes. As a result, the coming generations will be empowered by the laid down fundamentals of diversity, allowing them to explore differences in a safe and more child-friendly environment.

Relying on years of experience in service delivery of PSS, and Children & Adolescents Education, and through its partnership with the MoE and UNICEF in the implementation of the Non-Formal Education – Dropout Program, MECI has been able to reach and provide education to an outstanding 1784 (as of July 2021) out of school children in the centers located across 10 out of 12 governorates.

By attending the UNICEF – MECI Dropout Program which consists of three cycles, and by passing the third cycle post exam, the learners will be awarded a completion certificate issued by the MoE, which allows them to join Home Schooling under the NFE, or enroll in the Vocational Training Centers in order to acquire skilled labor certificate.

The Dropout Graduation Certificate does not only provide the children with another opportunity to redeem their future, but also reduces illiteracy rates which is a known fostering environment for different child related issues such as: Child Labor, Early Child Marriage, and poor Pregnancy Spacing.

One of the children who benefited from the UNICEF – MECI Dropout Program was Widad; a 15 year old Syrian girl that has Osteogenesis Imperfecta – an inherited disorder that affects bone growth and structure. Psychologically affected, as many of the Syrian children fleeing the war torn-country, her health conditions have also deteriorated, forcing her to use a wheelchair.

All of these challenges did not stop Widad enrolling in the UNICEF – Dropout Program, after hearing about it from the MECI center in Al-Zbaidiyya Secondary School for Girls. She was so excited to know the opportunities this program provides, and with the help from the facilitators along with her newly made friendships, she has drastically improved her writing and reading skills, while making sure to attend the sessions with the same high spirit she started with. Widad is currently placed in the second cycle of the program, advancing to the last stage and equipped with her ever-lasting determination to succeed.



*She was so excited to know the opportunities this Program provides, and with the help from the Facilitators along with her newly made friendships, she has drastically improved her writing and reading skills.*

# MERCY CORPS

In April 2021, Mercy Corps conducted a Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA) in Za'atari and Azraq refugee camps, with the aim of assessing the COVID-19 impact on the mental health and psychosocial needs of the camps' residents. The assessment targeted 229 Syrian refugees in both camps belonging to different age and gender groups, to gather a representative sample of the residents' opinions, experiences, and needs.

The results of the assessment highlighted that caregivers in both camps are confident in their information about COVID-19; however, children in both camps (41% of girls and 19% of boys) require more information and need more guidance around trusted information sources. Even when having enough information about COVID-19, caregivers and children alike still have fears about the virus (48% of study respondents). This may be attributed to the amount of knowledge they have obtained around the severity of this pandemic.

Regarding psychosocial and mental health wellbeing, caregivers, especially women, reported experiencing a negative impact on them as a result of COVID-19. 46% (56 out of 121) of the caregivers in both camps reported feeling so afraid that nothing could calm them down as a result of the stress they experienced in the two weeks preceding the assessment. Furthermore, 39% (47 out of 121) of the caregivers reported that they were angry to the level they felt out of control in the two weeks preceding the assessment.

As for family relations, there is consensus from all age groups on the negative impact of the pandemic on family relationships, since 58% (132 out of 229) of the survey respondents reported that these relations have been negatively affected as a result of COVID-19 continuing.



The increased violence is one of the important factors that has been raised by the respondents, especially by girls (46%), as well as boys (33%). Other elements like increased depression and tension were also highlighted as main factors which negatively affected family relations.

Importantly, the findings revealed that the majority of the survey respondents (68%) did not participate in any educational, recreational or cultural activities during COVID-19. This could explain why so many of them have faced challenges within their household. Findings revealed that 58% of boys' respondents and 54% of girls were interested in being involved in vocational and technical activities. 50% of the women caregivers were interested in educational interventions, psychosocial support, and computer and technology awareness sessions. 45% of men caregivers were interested in educational intervention and computer sciences in particular.

In conclusion, the study corroborated the need for humanitarian assistance for the refugees in both camps as an essential response to the COVID-19 crisis, which has impacted every aspect of their lives. Certain elements should be taken into consideration before starting to address any of their needs, such as awareness of the importance of the COVID-19 vaccines, which will be essential to helping people in both camps get back to their "normal" life.

## RELIEF INTERNATIONAL

Fariha was married when she was just 15 years old. She was living in Jordan's Za'atari refugee camp having fled the fighting in Syria. She says, "Our life was very hard. We had no money and we depended on the NGOs to give us food and coupons to buy groceries and essential stuff. When I just turned 15 years old, I got married. Because we were alone my mother decided it's better for me to marry so someone can take care of me."

Child marriages are steadily increasing amongst Syrian refugees, and it is reported that 35% of Syrian refugee girls are married before the age of 18. For many families they believe marriage will increase security for their daughter and their family, or they hope it will be an escape from extreme financial hardships. Yet the reality is that early marriage is linked to high risks of early pregnancy, mental health issues, increased risks of domestic violence, lack of employment and low education attainment.

Now 20, she is returning to her education with Relief International's support in Jordan's Za'atari refugee camp. This is her story.

"My life was super normal before the crises started in Syria, I was planning to continue my education. I graduated 6th grade and I was supposed to start traveling to the nearby village to start 7th grade but in the same year the crisis emerged in Syria in 2011 and travelling to school became too dangerous.

"As the situation became worse my family decided we had to leave and we decided to flee to Jordan. We made it to Za'atari, and in those early years we lived in caravans and tents. It was just lots of tents everywhere and some caravans, desert everywhere and people usually didn't leave their tents at the beginning – we would just go to collect food and other things they would give us like mattresses, kitchen utensils and blankets and return home.

"It was just my mother with me, my younger brother and two sisters. We heard that there were schools we could go to, but our mother was worried that something might happen to us if we left the house, so we didn't go. We stayed in the caravan all the time. I remember I really wanted to go to school but mum didn't allow me.

"Mum thought it would be best if I got married. I told her that I didn't want to marry at first, but in the end I agreed. It was awful because he was my uncle's son so I couldn't accept him I felt like he is my brother, and I couldn't see him as my husband.

"I only stayed married for three months and went back to mother's house. My mother agreed that I didn't need to go back and that I could stay with her because she saw how miserable I was at the time.

"Then I got married again when I was 17 years old and now have two children. When my daughter was two months old, an outreach team from RI approached our house and told us about the Early Childhood Development center."

In 2018, Relief International opened Early Childhood Development Centers in Za'atari and Azraq refugee camps. These early learning centers offer safe spaces for nearly 300 children up to four and a half years. The centers accept children from birth to ensure their mothers and caretakers can resume their education or work as soon as possible. The education program for mums is tailored to help them catch up on missed classes, and eventually graduate the 10th grade and plan for their future.

Fariha says, "I took my daughter to the center and they told me that you also can register and continue your education while we take care of your baby in the same center. I went home and told my husband, and he didn't mind me going back to school, so I went the next day and registered. I was so happy to go back to school. I've met friends here and I'm having a lot of fun, and my favorite subject is Arabic.



## SAMS

"The ability to see is everything. My life came to a halt and everything became so dark that I couldn't think about my future."

Ahmed, a 25 year old Syrian refugee from Dara'a, has sought refuge in Jordan since 2014 and began working in a plastic factory to make ends meet. Unfortunately, he was diagnosed with Behçet's Syndrome, a rare disorder that causes vasculitis. Unable to access care, Ahmed's condition continued to worsen and he developed a new condition called retinitis, an eye disease which damages one's retina.

Recently, Ahmed and his family came across an announcement about an upcoming SAMS Medical Mission to Jordan. As soon as he got in touch with our team, Ahmed was transferred to the Middle East Eye Hospital in Amman. His initial diagnosis revealed that due to retinitis, cataracts had formed affecting his eyesight and limiting him to only being able to use 30% of his vision.

Hospital staff were able to successfully perform an operation on Ahmed. That treated his issues and helped give him back his eyesight. He thanked everyone who played a role in saving his eyesight and was happy with the treatment he received.

This mission was among several local missions that SAMS has carried out in Jordan since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the current global health crisis, our international medical missions in the region have been temporarily suspended. However, we have continued to work with our local partners and volunteers to ensure that patients receive the care they need.

We've been able to successfully coordinate with the Jordanian Ministry of Health and UNHCR to receive patient cases, refer them to local doctors when further examination is needed, and get them the additional treatment needed based on their diagnosis. SAMS carried out three local medical missions from March to July 2021, during which 296 medical services were provided to Syrian and Jordanian beneficiaries.

SAMS Medical Center in Za'atari Refugee Camp works in coordination with the Jordanian Ministry of Health and UNHCR, providing dental and imaging services to the local community. It was recently approved by the Jordanian Ministry of Health to provide vaccinations and SAMS has been responding accordingly. The number of services provided between March to July 2021 was 3,451 medical services.

*"The ability to see is everything. My life came to a halt and everything became so dark that I couldn't think about my future."*



## UMR

Since 2011, approximately 244 million people have fled Syria out of fear for their safety – with nearly half of them being women and children. Isolation, overcrowded host countries, and lack of work experience has left Syrian refugee women with nowhere to turn – which is where UMR's Ego Jasmine Project comes into play.

In short, the Ego Jasmine Project empowers women economically through skills development and entrepreneurship training. Our goal is to provide vulnerable women with a permanent solution to the financial and economic problems they face as women and as refugees.

Lara Shahin, a Syrian refugee and the General Manager of UMR's Jasmine Project based in Jordan, struggled to build a sustainable lifestyle on her own after she fled. She explained, "I came to Jordan in 2012 because of the Syrian crisis. At the beginning I thought, how can I support myself or my family?"

In a study done by UNHCR, they found that "many women say the stress of exile has been exacerbated by assuming new burdens of responsibility. Many previously relied on men to provide for the family, handle business outside the house, and make decisions." These women learned they would have to take on new responsibilities and in many cases were expected to become the sole breadwinner and caretaker for their entire family – which was no small task. The average number of people living in Syrian female-headed households is about 5.

Lara, alongside UMR, created the Ego Jasmine Project to help refugee women like herself create a financially stable life for themselves. Lara explained when beginning the project, "we organized courses to support the ladies and [teach] them how to make products to start selling at the local markets. We made beautiful, handmade products and we started to reach more ladies in Amman.

Today, Ego Jasmine includes courses that first train women in a multitude of crafting skills, such as crochet, soap-making, creating beauty products, and more. Then, these women are taught business, marketing, and entrepreneurial skills so that they can sell their products both locally and in markets around the world.

Women who have been trained through the Ego Jasmine Project no longer have to worry about how they will find work, feed their families, or live comfortably. The income they make from their work producing products for Jasmine has allowed them to support their families. Moreover, the Jasmine Project has given these women a sense of community again: it has created opportunities and transferable skills that refugee women can use to support their families, no matter how their circumstances change.

For decades, women have been fighting for equality at home, the workforce, in politics, and in every aspect of society all over the world. Massive strides towards gender equality are made every day, but unfortunately there is still much work to be done. When one woman experiences a victory, it is a victory for all. This is why UMR's Ego Jasmine Project is necessary; it is creating an opportunity for women to be successful, earn their own living, and not be dependent on anyone for their survival.

Over the next few years, UMR plans to expand Ego Jasmine so that we can reach a variety of different women who are facing hardships. Our ultimate goal is to give ALL women the chance to be self-sustainable and successful, no matter where life takes them.

# WUSC

*Three Refugee Olympic athletes bound for Canada to pursue their postsecondary education after Tokyo Games*

Three athletes from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Refugee Olympic Team, have been offered admission to Sheridan College in Oakville, Ontario for the 2021-2022 academic year through a new complementary pathway of World University Service of Canada (WUSC) long-standing Student Refugee Program (SRP). These athletes will be sponsored to resettle to Canada where they can continue their studies and their athletic pursuits after the Tokyo Games. This new initiative is a collaboration between WUSC, Sheridan College and UNHCR.

Having fled their countries due to conflict and persecution, refugees often find themselves in limbo, where they face barriers to studying, working, and pursuing their passions such as sports. Refugees are in need of access to solutions that allow them to rebuild their lives. Resettlement is one solution, yet according to UNHCR, less than one percent of the more than 26.4 million refugees worldwide are resettled each year. More innovative solutions are needed to respond to this global crisis.

Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program provides a unique model for the development of complementary pathways to safe third countries by mobilizing community actors, such as schools, community groups, and businesses, to actively participate in refugee protection through sponsorship, one that has the potential to be scaled internationally. The Student Refugee Program is one such pathway which provides resettlement to refugee youth through sponsorship from Canadian post-secondary schools.

"What Rose Nathike, Paulo Amotun, and James Nyang will remind the world on the Olympic stage in Tokyo, is that we have a collective responsibility to uphold the rights and help realize the potential of millions of refugees around the world. WUSC is pleased to collaborate with our partners to find innovative solutions for all refugees, and looks forward to welcoming Rose Nathike, Paulo Amotun, and James Nyang to Canada after the games," explains WUSC's Executive Director, Chris Eaton.

